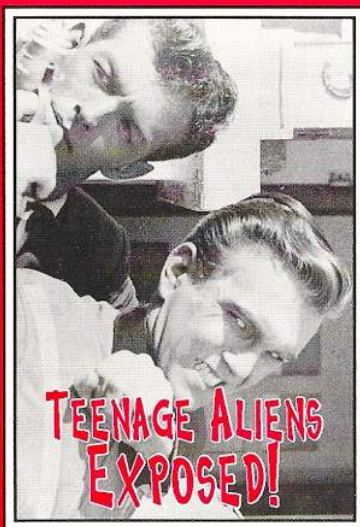


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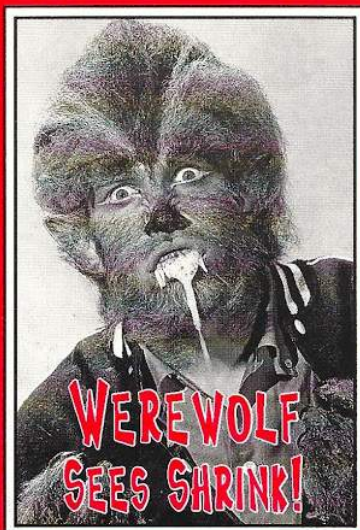
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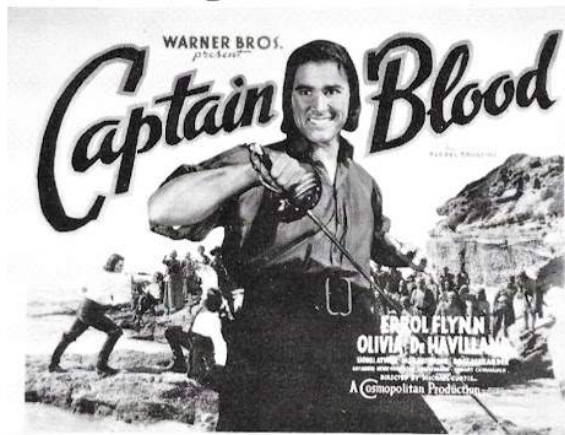
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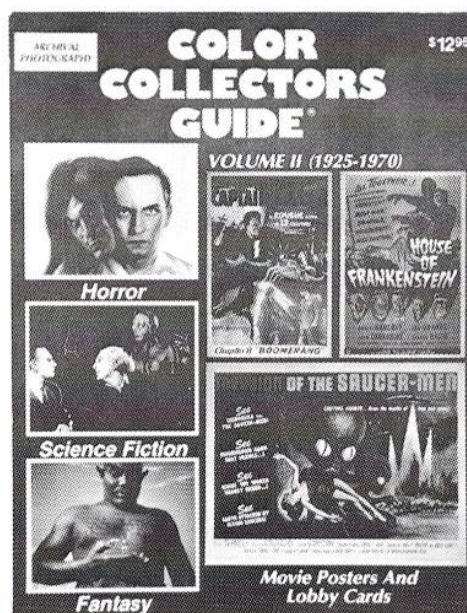
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*Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters in WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*  
*David Love and Bryan Grant in TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*  
*Michael Landon in I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*



# Scarlet Letters

Just a line to let you know how much I enjoy *Scarlet Street*, which I read on the flight home from the *Famous Monsters* convention. It's really outstanding! Hope the interview works out, and look forward to seeing it. All the best.

Robert Bloch  
Los Angeles, California

Psycho author Robert Bloch will visit these pages in an upcoming issue. Unfortunately, this issue, like Norman's mom, is already stuffed.

I just received the spring issue of *Scarlet Street*, and had to write and tell you I think it's your finest issue to date—and not just because of the great review by Drew Sullivan of my new book, *Forties Film Talk*. I am so grateful to you for receiving it so warmly, and for placing the review in so exciting an issue. My deepest thanks, of course, to Mr. Sullivan for his perceptive writing (and not just because he liked the book).

It was a special delight to see my old favorite Beverly Garland on the cover of *Scarlet Street*, and to read the superb pieces relating to her inside: Kevin G. Shinnick's interview and John Brunas' article on her film *THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE*. Beverly deserved to be the biggest of stars.

The brief interview with Richard Dempsey was a gem. Gregory Mank's article on the lost Karloff and Lugosi movie was tremendous. Greg is one of the most talented and knowledgeable people writing on film today. Richard Valley's interview with Tommy Kirk was terrific, most revealing, as was Michael Mallory's with Tim Considine. Also loved Scot D. Ryersson's piece on *AND THEN THERE WERE NONE*, one of my pet mystery movies.

As I said, a tremendous issue. I'm thrilled to be part of it.

Doug McClelland  
Author, *Forties Film Talk*  
Bradley Beach, NJ

Who but *Scarlet Street* would think of reteaming 50s and 60s favorites Tim Considine and Tommy Kirk for twin interviews (*Scarlet Street* #10)?

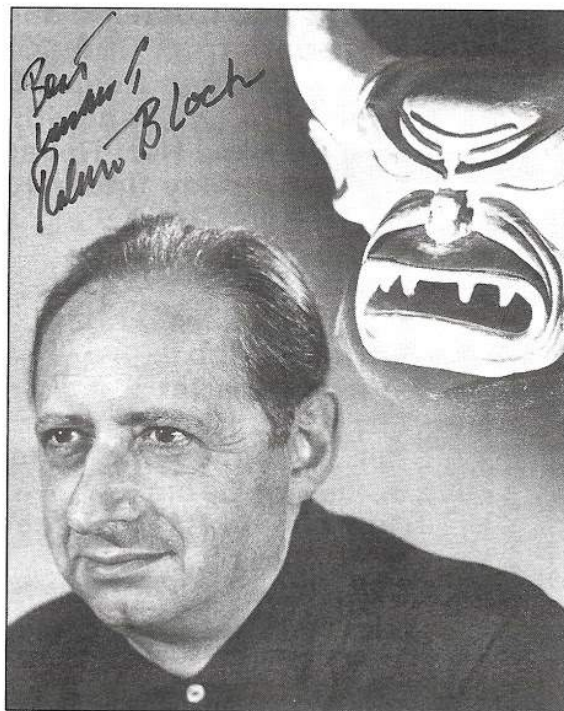
What a fascinating study in contrasts! Mr. Kirk found Fred MacMurray talented but "sort of a jerk," while Mr. Considine found his TV dad "a warm, sweet guy;"

Mr. Kirk shows no interest in acting again or even doing another interview (our loss on both counts), while Mr. Considine seems cheerfully open to either request (definitely our gain).

Mr. Kirk blames his own blatantly self-destructive behavior for sabotaging a promising career, whereas Mr. Considine asked to leave a pleasant work environment at both Disney and *MY THREE SONS* to seek new challenges; Mr. Kirk, the boy who moved us to tears in *OLD YELLER*, surprisingly calls it "not natural" for him to reveal himself on camera, yet Mr. Considine (as do fans of that film) remembers his old friend as "a fearless actor," a "monster talent" whose skill as a performer even today Mr. Considine admires.

Then, too, how odd to find Disney "boy next door" Tommy Kirk's teen years so troubled with rebellious "problem child" behavior, and to discover young Tim Considine—who often played the sullen "rude kid" type who made life rough for social misfits Kirk

## WANTED: MORE READERS LIKE . . .



ROBERT BLOCH



and David Stollery (in *THE SHAGGY DOG* and *SPIN AND MARTY*, respectively)—so surprisingly well-disciplined, mature (a TV director in 1965!), and easy to handle. Anyone familiar with the usual casting of both actors in various projects at Disney would have bet their Mouseke-ears it must have been the other way around!

I look forward to other "side by side" interviews like this. It's always interesting to see the same view from both sides of the street—*Scarlet* or otherwise! Keep up the good work.

Have you given thought to a Roddy McDowall interview? He's done lots of great genre work (*THE LEGEND OF HELL HOUSE*, *IT!*, *FRIGHT NIGHT*), not to mention playing hundreds of good guys and bad guys in films from *LASSIE COME HOME* to *THAT DARN CAT*. Any chance?

Robert Alan Crick  
Russellville, KY

More than a chance, actually—a certainty! Roddy McDowall will visit *Scarlet Street* for an exclusive interview, coming soon.

I found *Scarlet Street* #10 to be another highly interesting issue, though a few errors leapt off the pages and hit me right between the eyes. (Did your fact-checkers take a month off?) Contrary to what John Brunas wrote in his entertaining article on *THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE*, *ALLIGATOR* and *RUE MORQUE* are not director Roy Del Ruth's only horror credits; he also directed one of the most historically notable chillers of all time, *THE TERROR* (1928)—the first-ever horror talkie. And Scot D. Ryersson, in his look back at *AND THEN THERE WERE NONE*, makes several references to producer Harry Alan Towers and writer Peter Welbeck, unaware of the well-known fact that "Welbeck" is Towers' writing *nom de screen*. Ryersson is also blissfully unacquainted with a more recent Towers abomination:

*Continued on page 8*



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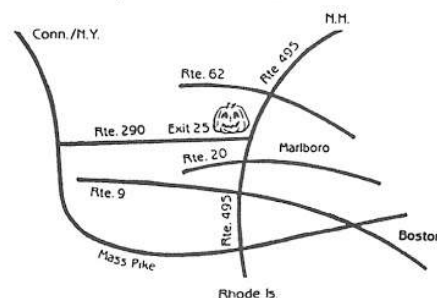
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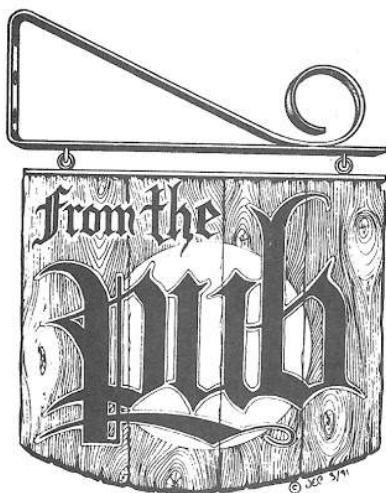
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The *Scarlet Street* gang spent the 1993 Memorial Day weekend at the *Famous Monsters of Filmland* 35th Anniversary celebration in Alexandria, Virginia. There we had the good fortune of having Noel Neill as our guest for dinner as well as for a pleasant evening at the rooftop lounge. Richard Valley (he is the editor, you know) and I escorted Superman's girlfriend to her room and, after much hugging, we left and boarded the elevator. I told Richard, "When I was little, I used to say to my mother, 'When I grow

up, I want to be just like Lois Lane.' Now I've met my personal role model and I can die happy." At that very moment, the elevator doors opened and in walked the grim reaper, semi-fresh from the costume party going on downstairs. That'll teach me to watch what I say!

That's the way the weekend went. You never knew who (or what) was going to pop up. Noel was only one star in a galaxy of guests. The list included Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, Carroll Borland, Gloria Stuart, Richard Matheson, Curt Siodmak, Ray Harryhausen, Joe Dante, John Landis, John Agar, Jim Danforth, Ann Robinson . . . I could go on, but I haven't mentioned the man they all came to honor: Forrest J Ackerman!

To say that Forry had a great time is an understatement. He went from morning 'til night and didn't miss a thing. Late one evening I took a stroll and chanced upon the remnants of a party in one of the ball rooms. There I found Forry, still dancing at 2 A.M.! It was quite a party.

The *Scarlet Street* table was visited by a wonderful assortment of celebs, contributors, readers new and old, and reporters from ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT and *The New York Times*. Even my husband showed up! The staff (including Sally Gellert, Tom Amorosi, Jill Clarvit, Kevin Shinnick, Buddy Scalera,



Noel Neill

Ellie Bernstein, John Brunas, Michael Brunas, Richard Scrivani, Tom Weaver, and Bernie O'Heir) made a lot of new friends, sold a lot of mags, and handed out a ton of blood-red *Scarlet Street* buttons. Thanks, Forry, for including us in your anniversary revels. Like Cagney at the flaming finish of *WHITE HEAT*, we had a blast!

*Jessie Jilly*

Photo by Buddy Scalera

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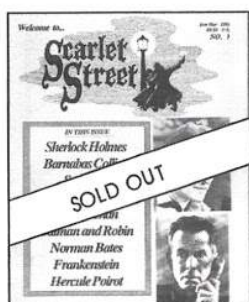


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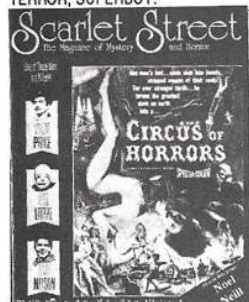
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## Continued from page 4

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH, with Herbert Lom, Frank Stallone, and Brenda Vaccaro—purported to be based on Poe, but actually TEN LITTLE INDIANS again, redone with a killer dressed in a blood-red mask and robe. Ryerson's article was excellent, right up until his climactic contention that recent slasher films like HALLOWEEN and FRIDAY THE 13TH were based on the Christie classic—an allegation which is (almost) as hilarious as it is ludicrous.

James Brewster  
North Tarrytown, NY

It was indeed a revelation reading the Tommy Kirk interview. A few years ago, Richard Lamparski gave a fine rundown in one of his *Whatever Happened to . . . ?* books, but another author with a copy-cat book interviewed Tommy and didn't say Tommy was gay, but "supported underground causes." This isn't the 1950s any more, pal! I'm glad I forgot who wrote the book. Forgettable is right! Infinitely.

I was sorry to hear that Tommy forsook acting, because I always thought he was convincing, natural, and unaffected. I can relate to what he said when he mentioned that people on the

set were less friendly when they knew he was gay—but, Tommy, they weren't worth a crumb from the sponge cake I threw out at Christmas!

Cy Gaffney, Jr.  
Homewood, IL

Tommy Kirk "supported underground causes?" That's like buying subway tokens, right? What is he, one of the Mole People?

I subscribe to *Scarlet Street* and I enjoy it immensely. I read an article in issue #5 by Michael Orlando Yaccarino about the movie THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED. I found his review most interesting. I have a question: Is the unedited version on video and, if so, where can I order a copy?

Wayne Melnick  
Fords, NJ

THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED is not legally available on video. By the way, if you enjoyed the article, don't miss the exciting two-part interview with the film's star, John Moulder-Brown, in back Streets #7 and #8. Both issues are still available; see page seven.

Congratulations on yet another grand issue [Scarlet Street #9]. Being a longtime fan of the art of stop-motion effects, I found the article on THE BLACK

SCORPION very entertaining. Having discussed the film with a select group of stop-motion artists (and examined the actual models of the scorpions, worm, and spider up close), I think I can shed some light on the "questionable" initial concept for the film. The incomplete footage of the "reptilian" (actually a mutated, giant, hairless baboon with moving, elephant-trunk-like "tusks") was filmed after BLACK SCORPION, on one of its sets. The test was shot to help sell Pete Peterson's LAS VEGAS MONSTER project.

It would be nice if you did a follow-up article on the effects for BLACK SCORPION by interviewing Mr. Bob Burns, who actually visited Willis O'Brien at the "studio" while they were filming the miniatures. Bob knew (and knows) all the real talent in Hollywood, and could give you many insights into movies.

Ron Lizorty  
St. Louis, MO

Your magazine is a revelation. At long last the cinema of the macabre is given its due! The article on Joan Bennett (my favorite actress) in *Scarlet Street* #9 was a splendid eulogy to a star of smoldering looks and prolific accomplishment.

Continued on page 10



# Frankly Scarlet



Sometimes it turns out "as originally and so beautifully planned"—as Katharine Hepburn purred near the delicious conclusion of *THE PHILADELPHIA STORY* (1940)—and then again, sometimes it doesn't. Two issues ago we managed to misspell British author R. Chetwynde-Hayes' name, and last ish we performed the same dubious service for movie-memorabilia-collector Ron Borst. (Sincere apologies to both Mr. Chetwynde-Hayes and Mr. Borst, and I wonder if they've heard about *The New Yorker* misspelling Stephen Sondheim's name on their cover? These upstart magazines!) Also last issue, I concluded this column with the fateful words "Don't forget to drop by next time when—barring last-minute rescheduling, of course—Debbie Reynolds and Curtis Harrington will tell us *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN* . . ."

Well, guess what? Curtis Harrington's here, all right, but Debbie didn't do *Scarlet Street*. (Thank God for the "last-minute rescheduling" loophole; at least I said this mightn't work out.) We were pretty confident that we were going to get the singing, dancing star of *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* (1952) and *THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN* (1964). She'd agreed to do the interview, had even invited us to drop by the set of her then-current movie. (Director Oliver Stone nixed the notion.) Her assistant had assured us that we could use Debbie Reynolds' name in our advertising, that it was definitely going to happen. Well, it didn't—and,

believe me, it wasn't for want of trying. (We've got the phone bills to prove it!) Luckily, we also had ever-courteous Curtis Harrington to come to our rescue. The director of such *Scarlet Faves* as *NIGHT TIDE* (1963), *GAMES* (1967), *THE KILLING KIND* (1973), and *THE CAT CREATURE* (1973) pulled, not a rabbit out of his hat, but *HELEN*'s own rascally rabbit killer: Shelley Winters!

You'll find our bloodchilling coverage of *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN*? on page 49, followed by Kevin G. Shinnick's interview with Curtis Harrington on page 59 and Jessie Lilley's incisive talk with Shelley Winters on page 65. Trust me, they are not to be missed.

Also not to be missed is a fascinating, never-before-published interview with the late, great Gale Sondergaard, courtesy of no-holds-barred interviewer and filmscribe Boze Hadleigh. (The screen's Spider Woman was one of the stars of the aforementioned *CAT CREATURE*. See how it all comes together—more or less?)

We have lots of other treats in store this issue, not the least of which are *Scarlet Street*'s startling exposé of 1959's *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*, and Richard Scrivani's chat with Chris Costello (Lou's daughter) and Bud Abbott, Jr. Why Abbott and Costello in *The Magazine of Mystery and Horror*, you ask? Name another comedy team who met the Frankenstein Monster, Count Dracula, the Wolf Man, the Mummy, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and the Invisible Man—not to mention the late, great Gale Sondergaard in 1946's *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES*. (See how it all—or did I say that already?)

Over on page 6, Madame Publisher (who still hasn't told Joe Franklin who edits this rag) has a few nice words to say about last May's 35th Anniversary Celebration of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and Noel Neill, who attended at the special invitation of *Scarlet Street*. Let me add here and now that, without *FM*, there would



*Meredith Baxter, Kent Smith, Keye Luke, and Gale Sondergaard (Seated) in Curtis Harrington's THE CAT CREATURE (1973), scripted by Robert Bloch.*

never have been a *Scarlet Street*. It was a thrill meeting some of our ever-growing legion of readers in person, and having Leonard Maltin, in his coverage of the convention on *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT*, note *Scarlet Street* as one of the mags following in the noble clawprints of "Forry's Folly." (That's what they called *Famous Monsters* when it first appeared at the corner newsstand.) Let me say with editorial pride that *Scarlet Street* has the best staff and contributors in the business, bar none. As I modestly remarked to a ravenous fan who complimented me on being able to edit a mag so chock-full, so dense with marvelous material: "Well, listen, we have a lot of dense people working for us."

Oops! See you next time . . . if I live!

*Richard Valley*

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### Continued from page 8

Here's a suggestion: Please devote an article to the lovely and talented British actress Barbara Shelley. Miss Shelley has made such a critically-acclaimed contribution to the genre, yet has been curiously ignored by the press. One has only to see her performances in *BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRE* or any of her Hammer films to realize what a scintillating gift her rare combination of beauty, breeding, and talent provides.

Hunter Seitz  
Louisville, KY

Please "mug me". That is, please send out your *Scarlet Street* mug. This is a charming magazine. Please do not let it fall into a gore-shriek publication! It is perfect as it is.

Dallas Jenks  
Kimberly, B.C.

*Scarlet Street's own mug, available in glorious black and red, can be ordered via the ad on page 46. (Okay, it's a shameless plug, but so's Mr. Ed...)*

While at the Nostalgia Vision Con in Baltimore, I picked up a copy of *Scarlet Street* #8. It's a well-done issue. Very appealing to a long-time horror and mystery fan like myself! Your fanzine has an ex-

cellent blend of the two genres. I enjoyed the features on *FRANKENSTEIN* and *DRACULA MEET THE CRITICS* and 20 *VAMPIRE CLASSICS*. I've often felt that *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* and *SON OF DRACULA* have been misidentified as Universal "embarrassments." They are good, competent entries in Universal's stable. I'm glad to read someone else agrees with me!

Also at the Con, I got to see your publisher, Jessie Lilley—and indeed she's probably the prettiest publisher around!

Fanzines are like a drink of water to thirsty fans like myself, providing insight, reflections, and commentary on the topics which interest us!

D. Keith Henderson  
Baltimore, MD

*Boy, did we have a battle royal over this—but Jessie won, so we printed the letter unedited. Thanks for the kind words about the mag, too. We like to think of Scarlet Street as a book with fanzine appeal and prozine quality. And staples.*

Just managed to pick up the latest issue (#10) of *Scarlet Street* and I must say that I'm quite astonished (and pleasantly surprised) to see a professional magazine concerning the golden age(s) of horror staying the course. I particularly enjoyed the rather curious case of *GIFT*

OF GAB—it makes you wonder how many other obscurities remain "unobtainable" to this day!

Anyway, I wish you as much success for the future as you are obviously basking in at the present time.

George N. Houston  
Editor, *Midnight in Hell*  
Renfrewshire, Scotland

I've needed something like Michael Thomas' piece on Boris Karloff's make-up in *Scarlet Street* #9 since, as a lad, memorizing the photo (I think from *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN*) in my Scout Dramatics merit-badge manual. Thank you for that, and the lovely glimpses of Peter Cushing and Veronica Carlson. I wonder if your reviewers are as fond as I am of *TERROR ISLAND*?

It's very odd that H.C. Bailey's beautifully-written Reggie Fortune mysteries continue unavailable in U.S. reprint, and nearly as scarce in the U.K. If Granada could cast it, I'd love to see them as a period series. That detective's relation to children is unparalleled. Perhaps half-hour versions could be made, with brisk cutting.

It's good to see so intelligent a treatment of Rex Stout in this issue [*SEEMS LIKE OLD CRIMES*, by Susan Svehl]. *Triple Zeck* is my favorite threesome.



I'd recommend *Prisoner's Base*, *Murder by the Book*, or *The Doorbell Rang* to newcomers.

I've three questions about films: (1); Is Vincent Price's *THE MAD MAGICIAN* available anywhere on video? (2); Are the Nigel Kneale/Val Guest Quatermass BBC kinescopes available on video? (3); Could any of you identify my own personal Lost Film? It's about a house with portraits on the walls with eyes that flip back to become peep-holes, and a staircase that, when a lever is pulled, becomes a slide.

Gerald Burns  
Author, *Shorter Poems*  
Austin, TX

*THE MAD MAGICIAN* is not available on tape. *QUATERMASS AND THE PIT*, the last of the original three Quatermass serials (none of which, incidentally, were helmed by Val Guest), is available from Sinister Cinema. Your lost film may possibly be 1944's *GHOST CATCHERS*, a Universal comedy starring Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson. The sliding staircase was a standard Olsen and Johnson gag and, if memory serves, it turned up in that film—along with Andy Devine as a horse and Lon Chaney, Jr., as a bear. (What, no wolf?)

I would refer Allen Kretschmar [*Scarlet Street* #9] and other readers wishing to know more about Arthur Lucan a.k.a. Old Mother Riley, to read the chapter on

him/her in my 1986 book *Great Pretenders: A History of Female and Male Impersonators in the Performing Arts*, published by Wallace-Homestead. Unfortunately, the book is currently out of print, but I am sure copies can be obtained directly from local libraries or on inter-library loan.

Anthony Slide  
Author, *The Slide Area*  
Studio City, CA

I second your recommendation of the entertaining and informative *Peter Cushing: The Gentle Man of Horror and His 91 Films* by Del Vecchio and Johnson. But I thought that (surprisingly, given that they are fans) they underrated some of Cushing's films, such as *THE BLACK KNIGHT* and *HORROR EXPRESS*, and especially my favorite horror movie, the "frankly poor" (your reviewer's opinion) *SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN*. Panned as well by Cushing's costars, Christopher Lee and Vincent Price, this film does have its defenders, notably the late Fritz Lang. As Price observed in an interview (I quote from memory), "I don't even know what this movie is supposed to be about, but Fritz Lang loved it; he thought it was great."

Unusual for a horror film, *SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN* is half realistic political thriller, providing Cushing with one of his most fascinating (albeit

brief) roles as a military officer in a police state. An allegory à la *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, with a very unconventional structure, this is a genuinely unique film, and the stars are brilliant, with Price as a different sort of mad scientist and Lee as a spymaster. The movie also boasts an unknown actor named Marshall Jones giving a terrifying performance as a secret police thug.

I love your magazine, and can't praise Gregory Mank enough. *The Hollywood Hissables* was well worth its steep purchase price, and I read through his book on Karloff and Lugosi twice before returning it to the library. By the way, in regard to the great Hammer vs. Universal debate: Both were excellent, but Vincent Price is the best.


Robert Hauser  
Glen Ridge, NJ

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Here's the lineup ...

## DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 49 (#DI-49)

**HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL** (1959) Vincent Price, Carol Ohmart, Richard Long, Carolyn Craig, Elisha Cook. Directed by William Castle. Probably Vincent Price's most widely seen film. One of director Castle's greatest 'gimmick' horror films. An eccentric millionaire and his sleazy wife hold a party in a haunted mansion. Any guest that spends the night receives ten grand...if they're alive in the morning to collect it.

**THE BAT** (1959) Vincent Price, Agnes Moorehead, John Sutton. Another Allied Artists drive-in schlocker we've all grown to know and love. A mad, hooded killer known only as 'The Bat' leaves a trail of terror and murder in a creepy old gothic mansion filled with horrified people. Great fun as the fiend uses his claw-like hand to rip out the jugular veins of his victims. A slick remake of the 1926 silent classic.



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**CURSE of the DEVIL**

**TOWER of SCREAMING VIRGINS**

## DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 50 (#DI-50)

**CURSE OF THE DEVIL** (1973) Paul Naschy, Faye Falcon. Naschy played a werewolf more times than all the other major horror stars put together. In this, Paul's seventh lycanthropic opus, he's turned into a snarling beast by a group of female devil worshippers who are descendants of an ancient witch who was executed by one of Paul's distant relatives 400 years earlier. Recently remastered from 35mm. Definitely rated "R".

**TOWER OF SCREAMING VIRGINS** (1971) Terry Torday, Jean Plat. In the late 60s and early 70s, imported horror films were bounced all over the place. Paired with one film for awhile, then retitled and paired with another film a few months later. In this well traveled European, exploitation/horror thriller, a French Countess who tires of her lovers, disposes of them in very brutal fashion. Recently remastered from 35mm and another definite "R" rating.

## DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 51 (#DI-51)

**FANGS OF THE LIVING DEAD** (1968, aka **MELANKA**) Anita Eckberg, John Hamilton, Diana Lorys. Anita inherits a haunted castle where she's terrorized by the niece of a woman who was burned as a witch. This was actually released as part of a triple bill called the "Orgy of the Living Dead Show", (sorry, our tapes can only hold two movies). Well, two outta three ain't bad.

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**KILL BABY KILL** (1966 aka **CURSE OF THE LIVING DEAD**) G. Rossi Stuart, Erica Blanc, Max Lawrence. Directed by Mario Bava. One of the great European horror films of the 1960s. Set in the 1800s. The murderous ghost of a young girl seeks revenge on the villagers that caused her death. Lots of swirling mists, cobwebbed rooms, black cats, and shadowy figures. Overall, an incredible film. Also part of the "Orgy of the Living Dead" triple bill. Uncut.



**Fangs of the Living Dead**

Mario Bava's

**Curse of the Living Dead**

**WARNING:** It has been reported that this man now resides in a mental hospital, as a result of attending a showing of this horror program! Because of this tragic event, we, the producers, are providing a free insurance policy insuring the sanity of each and every patron. We urge you to take advantage of this protection! Anyone entering the theatre without it does so at his own risk!

## DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 52 (#DI-52)

**LOST, LONELY, AND VICIOUS** (1959) Ken Clayton, Sandra Gies, Lilyan Chauvin, Barbara Wilson. First time on video! In this, one of the rarest of all J.D. movies, Clayton plays a young actor with dreams of stardom who fools around with a bevy of beautiful babes only to find himself in hot water because of it. Released by the same folks that gave us **TEENAGE THUNDER**, Howco International.

**JAIL BAIT** (1955) Timothy Farrell, Steve Reeves, Lyle Talbot, Delores Fuller. When Howco released **LOST, LONELY, AND VICIOUS** they needed something to play with it for double bill purposes, so in some areas of the country they tagged on this Ed Wood goodie that they'd released a few years before. Farrell plays a gangster wanted for murder who attempts to have his face changed via plastic surgery. The results are disastrous. Ed wrote and directed. A real hilarity.





#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 53 (#DI-53)

**BELA LUGOSI MEETS A BROOKLYN GORILLA** (1952) Bela Lugosi, Sammy Petrillo, Duke Mitchell, Charlita, Muriel Landers. Spurred on by the earlier success of his *BRIDE OF THE GORILLA*, producer Jack Broder decided to make a comedy-jungle-horror thriller with Lugosi and those infamous Martin and Lewis imitators, Mitchell and Petrillo. The result was one of most hilariously awful movies of all time, rivaling *PLAN 9* for pure badness. Bela plays a mad scientist with a formula for transforming a man into a gorilla. Recently remastered and upgraded.

**BRIDE OF THE GORILLA** (1951) Lon Chaney, Raymond Burr, Barbara Payton, Tom Conway. Jack Broder's Realart Company made a nice chunk of change on this Voodoo Jungle thriller. Burr plays a man haunted by a native curse that slowly drives him from the woman he loves (Payton), and into the jungle where he eventually transforms into a gorilla. A nice 'B' Effort with a fine cast. Though it was never part of a standard double bill, it was released in some areas with *BELA MEETS A BROOKLYN GORILLA*.

#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 54 (#DI-54)

**BLOOD FIEND** (1966) Christopher Lee, Julian Gower, Jenny Till. Has a plague of vampirism infested Paris? French law enforcement officers are perplexed by a series of 'blood' related murders. The mystery is centered around a grand guignol stage show and a beautiful young stage actress who seems to be hypnotized. One of Lee's better low budget shockers.

**VAMPIRE PEOPLE** (1966 aka *THE BLOOD DRINKERS*) Ronald Remy, Ed Fernandez. A mad nobleman and his vampire slaves terrify a small town until the villagers finally rise up and turn against them. This very interesting Filipino fright film was shot in a combination of color and sepia tones which give it a pronounced atmosphere of eeriness and dread.



#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 55 (#DI-55)

**SWORD AND THE DRAGON** (1956) Boris Andrejev, Natalie Medvedeva. A wonderful Russian fantasy. A legendary warrior, Ilya Mourometz, leads a life of fantastic adventures. He fights to save his people from an assortment of horrible monsters including a 3-headed dragon, a wind demon and other legendary creatures. One scene features a mountain of living men. From the director of *MAGIC VOYAGE OF SINBAD*. In color. Listen for Paul Frees' voice as the villain.

**THE DEVIL'S COMMANDMENT** (1956 aka *I, VAMPIRE!*) Gianni Canale, Dario Michaelis. Considered by many to be the granddaddy of modern Italian horror films. Directed by the two masters of Italian horror, Riccardo Freda and Mario Bava. The story concerns a mad scientist who kidnaps young girls and drains their blood to help rejuvenate an aging, evil duchess. Recently upgraded and letterboxed in the scope format.



#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 56 (#DI-56)

**BLOODSUCKERS** (1970) Peter Cushing, Patrick MacNee, Patrick Mower, Imogen Hassall. A retired Greek army officer helps a beautiful young girl search for her fiancé, who's been put under a spell by a cult of devil worshippers. He's eventually turned into a living vampire via the cult's evil influence. Recently remastered from 35mm. Rated 'R'.

**BLOODTHIRST** (1968) Robert Winston, Yvonne Nielson. An obscure b+w monster movie about a strange woman who retains youth via ritual killings and weird experiments. Also featured is a cool looking monster that looks like something you would have seen on the Outer Limits. This interesting Filipino horror film sat around for five years before being released stateside.



#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 57 (#DI-57)

**THE CHOPPERS** (1961) Arch Hall, Jr., Marianne Gaba, Tom Brown, Bruno VeSota. Now this is a drive-in movie. Arch and his gang of J.D. buddies strip abandoned cars along the highway of all valuable parts which they sell to shady used parts dealer, Vesota, (who's really excellent in the part). Gaba, who was a Playboy centerfold and Ricky Nelson's girlfriend, is an absolute knockout! This film has a real black and white, drive-in charm that's almost irresistible. Recently remastered from 35mm. From Fairway International.

**EEGAH** (1962) Arch Hall, Jr., Marilyn Manning, Richard Kiel, William Waters. A camp masterpiece from Fairway International. Truly awful in the most wonderful way. Arch discovers a caveman living in a nearby desert cave, who takes a fancy to his girlfriend Marilyn (who looks absolutely stunning in her bikini). He kidnaps her and her father. Arch comes to the rescue! (what a guy). Schlockier than schlock.

#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 58 (#DI-58)

**MONDO BOLORDO** (1964) Hosted by Boris Karloff. FIRST TIME ON VIDEO! From 35mm. In this, what has to be one of the greatest of all mondo movies, you'll see a midjet rock and roll star, Japanese bondage, an oriental opium den, children coke addicts in Ecuador, a transvestite bar, and many other totally bizarre customs and happenings. Truly one of the weirdest movies ever made.

**SPIDER BABY** (1964) Lon Chaney, Carol Ohmart, Jill Banner, Mantan Moreland. One of the best low budget horror films of the 1960s. Chaney, in one of the best performances of his career, is the household master of an eerie mansion full of regressive psychos. A taste blend of pure horror and black comedy that keeps you coming back for more. An unforgettable film.

#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 59 (#DI-59)

**HORRIBLE DR. HICHCOCK** (1962) Barbara Steele, Robert Flemyng, Montgomery Glenn. Unquestionably one of the better Italian horror films of the 1960s and certainly one of Barbara's best efforts. She plays the unsuspecting wife of a respected doctor who's actually a raving necrophiliac. In addition to this, he also plans on using Barbara as a guinea pig in an experiment to restore the beauty of his first wife, once believed dead, but who's actually alive. A tremendous music score.

**AWFUL DR. ORLOFF** (1962) Howard Vernon, Conrado San Martin, Diana Lorys. First time on video! A mad doctor stalks the foggy backstreets in search of young girls who he kidnaps and murders. He drains their blood and attempts to graft their skin to the horribly disfigured face of his daughter. A real sickie, but good. Considered by many to director Jesse Franco's best film and a great example of medical science fiction mixed with pure horror.



#### DOUBLE FEATURE NO. 60 (#DI-60)

**THE FIENDISH GHOULS** (1959 aka *MANIA*) Peter Cushing, Donald Pleasance. Probably the best 'Burke and Hare' movie ever made, (no offense, Boris). Cushing is outstanding as the ambitious Dr. Knox who stops at nothing to receive a steady supply of bodies for his research. Very brutal and shocking for its time. Pleasance is in top form as one of the murdering grave robbers. Our print is the uncult British version, running approx. 90 minutes.

**HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND** (1959 aka *IT'S HOT IN PARADISE*) Alex d'Arcy, Barbara Valentine, Reiner Brand, Heiga Neuner, Eva Schauland. First time on video! An airplane full of showgirls and their manager crash lands on a remote island. Their manager is bitten by a poisonous spider and is transformed into a hairy monster. Look out girls! Really corny and campy in the most nonsensical way. From 35mm. Skinny dipping scene, intact.



THIS OFFER ABSOLUTELY ENDS AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT NOVEMBER 30, 1993!



# BAT TALK

by Drew Sullivan



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**BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES** is about to become **BATMAN: THE ANIMATED MOVIE**. Warner Bros. is extending its reputation as the chronicler of the Dark Knight with the creation of the all-new feature length cartoon, originally slated as a direct-to-video production, but now scheduled for theatrical release this coming Christmas.

**BATMAN: THE ANIMATED MOVIE**, coproduced by Alan Burnett, Eric Radomski, and Bruce Timm, is inspired by the hit television series on the Fox network. The feature will bring to the screen an even higher quality of animation than is currently seen on the series—and, as fans of the series know,

*Bat voices! Standing Left to Right: Aron Kincaid (Killer Croc), Mark Hamill (the Joker), Richard Moll (Two Face), Paul Williams (the Penguin), and Kevin Conroy (Batman). Seated Left to Right: Diane Pershing (Poison Ivy) and Arleen Sorkin (Harley Quinn).*



TV animation doesn't get much better than it does on **BATMAN**. The movie will duplicate and visually expand the series' striking look, which Radomski and Timm, who also serve as the show's designers, describe as "Dark Deco."

The film introduces several new characters to the Bat Mythos, including Andrea Beaumont (voiced by Dana Delany), mobster Salvatore Valestra (Abe Vigoda), Councilman Arthur Reeves (Hart Bochner), and a new villain named Phantasm (Stacy Keach, Jr.). Regulars on board include Batman (Kevin Conroy; interviewed last issue), Alfred Pennyworth (Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.), Commissioner Gordon (Bob Hastings), and the Joker (Mark Hamill). Robin the Boy Wonder (Loren Lester; interviewed last issue) will not appear.

"We are extremely proud of the work that's been done on this special new feature film," said Jean MacCurdy, president of Warner animation. "It's unusual for an animated TV series such as **BATMAN** to draw so much critical praise. We feel that the talent involved represents the strong commitment Warner Bros. has made to the development of its animation division."

A possible result of releasing **BATMAN: THE ANIMATED MOVIE** to theatres is the wider range of action and character delineation available to the filmmakers. Not only have Burnett, Radomski, and Timm had to tone down the violence inherent in the *Legend of the Dark Knight*, they've also had to take into consideration network opposition to such matters as the Penguin (Paul Williams) smoking.

"That was a problem," admitted Radomski, "but they ended up allowing us to have him with his long, thin, cigarette holder. He just couldn't light it! I can see why they're not trying to promote smoking, but I think sometimes they get a bit too concerned about stuff like that. If a kid is going to smoke, he's going to smoke. Seeing a fat little criminal smoking on TV is not going to influence a decent kid."

The series has tried to steer clear of Tim Burton's vision of the Caped Crusader. Such similarities as exist are mainly found in the characters of the Catwoman (Adrienne Barbeau) and the Penguin:

"Warner Bros. asked us to keep things pretty close to **BATMAN RETURNS** as far as the Catwoman and Penguin went," said Radomski. "We met with Tim, and he gave us his own interpretation of the Penguin. Beyond that, he really didn't have much to do with our series. It's still dark and moody, but we interpreted it for animation."

**BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES** has been picked up by Fox for a second season. At least 65 new episodes (hopefully with such neglected villains as Mr. Freeze, Hugo Strange, the Riddler, and the Mad Hatter) will be produced to join the 65 already aired during the smash first season.



Bob Hastings has done it all. The veteran actor has been in show business for over 50 years, starting as a child singer on radio in 1935. Throughout the 30s and 40s, he was heard on such shows as *HILLTOP HOUSE*, *PEPPER YOUNG'S FAMILY*, *THIS IS NORA DRAKE*, and *ARCHIE ANDREWS*. His 50s television credits include *KRAFT THEATER* and *SGT. BILKO*, but he's best known as Lieutenant Elroy Carpenter on *McHALE'S NAVY*. He was seen in the films *THE GREAT IMPOSTER* (1960), *MOON PILOT* (1962), *BAMBOO SAUCER* (1968), and *HARPER VALLEY PTA* (1978). Bob has been married to wife Joan for 45 years. They have four children and eight grandchildren. Recently, *Scarlet Street* caught up with Bob at his home in California.

**Bob Hastings:** I'm just sitting here counting my money. I now have \$73, so I don't know where to go.

**Scarlet Street:** (Laughs) You could make a phone call.

**BH:** Right. What can I tell you?

**SS:** Well, we wanted to ask you about playing Commissioner Gordon on *BATMAN: THE ANIMATED SERIES*. Are you a voice-over veteran, or is this your first experience?

**BH:** Oh, I did quite a lot for Hanna-Barbera. Years ago. I did about four or five over at Hanna-Barbera, then a new regime came in, and I never worked for the new regime. You see, I'm an old radio actor from back in the 30s and 40s.

**SS:** Is radio acting similar to what you do for the cartoons?

**BH:** I would say it's very similar. Of course, what's different about it is that we sit in little booths of our own, so they can have a separate track on everybody, and cut in and out. Radio, when we did it live, we just went right through it. With *BATMAN*, we go through it, and we go back and do things that the director wants. The gal who directs this, Andrea Romano, she could play all the parts. (Laughs) I mean, I've worked with a lot of directors in radio and TV, and it's nice when somebody knows what they want—and when you agree with them. That always helps, too.

**SS:** Almost always.

**BH:** Yeah, I go back to the 30s in radio. Basically, in radio nobody can see you, so you have to be an actor. On TV people can see, even if you can't act, if you're beautiful or you look tough—that has a lot to do with it.

**SS:** In other words, you have to get it all across with the voice.

**BH:** You lose your imagination by not having things like radio. The last year or so, I've been collecting some of the old Basil Rathbone *SHERLOCK HOLMES* radio shows. And they're really fascinating; they hold up so incredibly well. I can remember the one with the snake . . .

**SS:** *THE SPECKLED BAND*.

**BH:** *THE SPECKLED BAND*! I remember hearing that; I was in bed, listening, and I could feel that cockamamie snake come into my bed. That was the great thing about radio.

**SS:** What were some of the shows that you did back in the 30s and 40s?

**BH:** Well, *PRETTY KITTY KELLY*, *CAVALCADE OF AMERICA*—and then, right after I got out of World War Two, I played Archie for about 10 years. Do you remember Archie, Betty, and Veronica? I was a big fan of those comics when I was a kid. I played Archie from 1946 to about 1955.

**SS:** With the advent of television, of course, radio died out. Did you move into live TV before doing *McHALE'S NAVY*?

**BH:** That was in New York. I lived in Brooklyn. I went to the



Bob Hastings

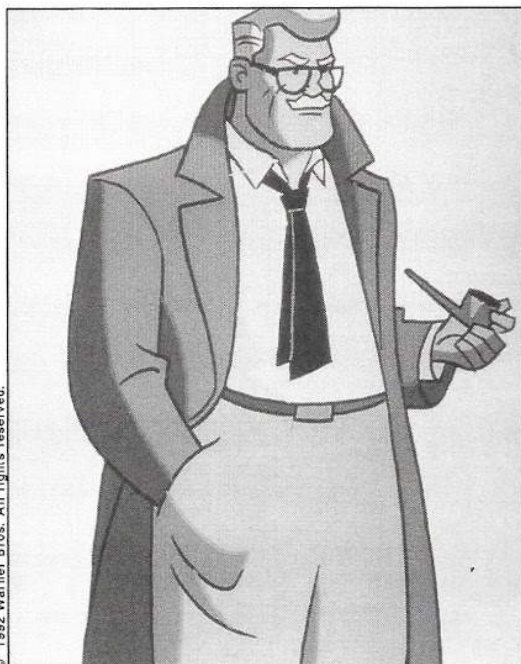
city to do the old live shows—you know, when they had *STUDIO ONE* and *U.S. STEEL HOUR*? As a matter of fact, one of the things they did was *NO TIME FOR SERGEANTS* with Andy Griffith. People always think it was a play first, but it was on TV, on *U.S. STEEL HOUR*. It went to Broadway and then it went to film. Andy Griffith became a big star from that. I did all the live shows, and I guess the first soap I did—live, back East—was *SEARCH FOR TOMORROW*. I did a lot of "lives," and then when radio died I came out to the coast to film a pilot for Paramount. That didn't go, but then I did *McHALE'S NAVY*. The producer of that also produced the old *BILKO* show with Matt Hiken. I'd done a lot of the *BILKO* shows. If they ever pressed me for the best military show that's ever been on, that's the one for me.

**SS:** That was a wonderful show.

**BH:** I can replace almost anybody. I can replace Alan Alda, I can replace Ernest Borgnine, but I could never replace Phil Silvers.

**SS:** Have you any instances of live TV when something went wrong?

**BH:** Oh, God, many things went wrong! (Laughs) You'd forget your lines and think, "My God! Where do I go from here?" I remember, I did a thing called *ADAM'S SQUAD* five



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## Report from the Commissioner

# Bob Hastings

Interviewed by Richard Valley





Paul Williams

Fiends, the feathered kind or otherwise, have been something which actor/composer Paul Williams has specialized in for much of his professional life. Horror fans remember him best as the manipulative Swan in Brian De Palma's *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE* (1974), but Williams also followed in the diminutive footsteps of the original Dr. Megalito Loveless, Michael Dunn, in *THE WILD WILD WEST REVISITED* (1979). Now, as Oswald Cobblepot (a.k.a. the Penguin, that pompous, waddling master of foul play), the Oscar-winning songsmith (for "Evergreen" from 1976's *A STAR IS BORN*) takes on the top-hatted mantle of Burgess Meredith and Danny DeVito.

**Scarlet Street:** Many of your roles in films have touched on the fantastic. Do you have an affinity for fantasy?

**Paul Williams:** I love it. Yeah. You know I'm always attached to those kinds of projects. And even things like *BUGSY MALONE*—it's a great escape from reality, you know? For some reason, it seems to me that sometimes, by relocating into that environment, we can write with a better perspective about our world. You know, the real world.

**SS:** Instead of hitting the audience with a direct statement, it's a more subtle way to comment on our society.

**PW:** Exactly. It's also great fun for somebody who's driven to not be a grown-up, you know?

**SS:** How did you get involved with acting in addition to song writing?

**PW:** Well, I actually started out as an actor. I didn't start writing songs until I was about 27. I guess I would have to qualify myself as a bit player at that time. I'd had a really

# Feathering His Nest

## Paul Williams

### Interviewed by Richard Valley

nice part in my first film, which was a movie called *THE LOVED ONE*. I played the boy genius who built rockets in that. Before that, I'd done a commercial and some summer stock, that sort of thing. After *THE LOVED ONE*, I worked months and months on a movie with Brando and Redford, called *THE CHASE*. I had, I think, maybe a dozen lines in that. I was so bored with it. I could only watch daytime TV; I had nothing to do. So I started writing songs for my own amusement. I got a job as a writer and improvisational actor on a local TV show, *THE MORT SAHL SHOW*, met a guy named Biff Rhodes, and he and I wrote some tunes. He went and played them for Herb Alpert's publishing company, and they said, "Who wrote the lyrics?" And Biff said, "Well, let me give you the phone number of the guy who wrote the lyrics." And that was me. I showed up at A & M in a stolen car and found a life's work. (Laughs)

**SS:** Several of your films—Brian De Palma's *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE*, *BUGSY MALONE*—are cult classics, while others, such as the *SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT* movies, are really mainstream.

**PW:** Well, those were just a fluke. You know, one of the things that I'm very open about is the fact that I'm a recovering alcoholic and addict. And when I look at those films—especially the last *SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT* that we did—I was out of control. I look at that person and say, "There's a person who really needs to get into rehab." (Laughs) The other films that you're talking about are probably the ones that reflect my own personality. I mean, I loved working with Burt

and doing those picture and all, but *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE* remains my favorite. Oddly enough, I can put one other picture on my best list, and that would be *ISHTAR*. It was destroyed by the critics and I can't defend the picture, but my work for it, writing, really getting into those two characters and writing bad songs for them—I think I did the right job. As an actor, I think some of my best work—one of my best roles—was probably in something nobody saw. I did a movie for TV called *THE WILD WILD WEST REVISITED*. It was just a great experience for me. The character of Megalito Loveless, Jr., was not dissimilar to the way I'm playing the Penguin, you know? And I've got a picture from that in my den. James Cagney visited the set, which was one of our great thrills and, of course, a photo op that I wouldn't miss—to get my picture taken with James Cagney. So there's this picture of the two of us stand-



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**LEFT:** Paul Williams made a monkey of himself (an orangutan, actually) in *BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES* (1973), the last of the celebrated APE series. **RIGHT:** Williams wrote the songs for and played the villainous Swan in *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE* (1974), directed by Brian De Palma.

ing together, and I'm dressed up in my Western regalia. I was walking by the other day, and I thought, "God, I almost look like the Penguin!" I weighed 50 pounds more than I do now.

**SS:** You mentioned *PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE*. How close to reality is the character of Swan?

**PW:** I haven't run into him! (Laughs) It's funny: When we were originally going to do it, Brian DePalma wanted me to play the role that Bill Finley played; he wanted me to be the Phantom. And I said, "You know, I'm not menacing. I mean, I'm little." The fact

is, you need to be big to be menacing, you know? So I wound up playing Swan. The other thing is that I was more comfortable playing somebody who stole music than somebody whose music was stolen. I was afraid people would see it as a statement: Obviously, this is what Paul Williams thinks of the music business. I was more comfortable playing the thief and with everybody knowing that it was a farce, you know? It was a satire. The music business has treated me really honestly.

**SS:** Included in your television credits is a show called *THE HARDY BOYS AND NANCY DREW MEET DRACULA*.

**PW:** My God, that's right! There's also *LOVE AND CURSES*. Have you ever seen that series?

**SS:** Yes.

**PW:** I did a great troll in that one—lives underground, eats worms, and likes to watch *WHO'S THE BOSS*. (Laughs) "That Italian guy is hysterical!"

**SS:** You starred in a *PLANET OF THE APES* film, too.

**PW:** Right, the last one. And the credit says "Introducing Paul Williams," even though I'd done several films before that.

**SS:** Well, they wanted to introduce you.

**PW:** They wanted to introduce me, so they did. You know, that was great, despite the fact that it took over three hours for makeup every morning. But it was the beginning of a couple of really great friendships. Claude Akins, who we referred to as

"Cuddles" when he was in his gorilla makeup, was wonderful in that. And Roddy McDowall, who's just a great actor. A consummate actor.

**SS:** He's doing a voice over for *BATMAN*, too.

**PW:** What's he doing?

**SS:** He's the Mad Hatter.

**PW:** We've never worked together on the show. I worked with Tim Curry—Tim initially was the Joker, and then he was replaced by Mark Hamill. One of the great things about doing this show is that you never know who's going to be there; you never know who's going to show up.

**SS:** To get back to *BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES*: You said the makeup took three hours to apply?

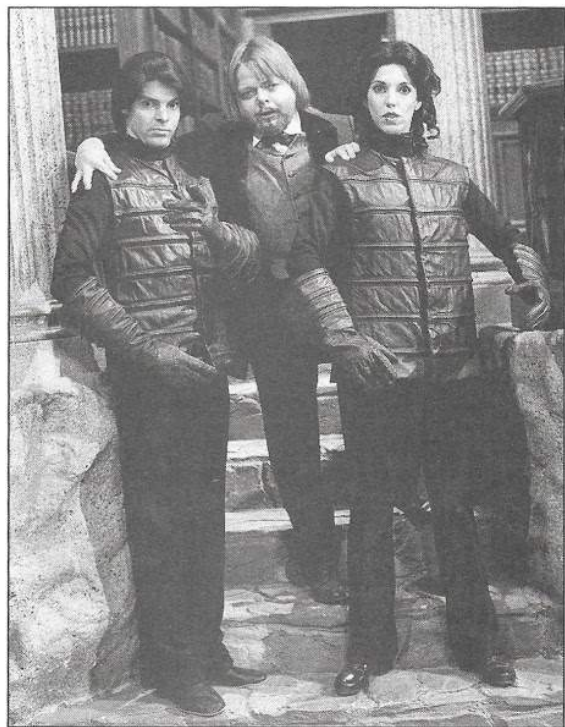
**PW:** Yeah. The car would pick me up at about three-thirty or four. I was in the makeup chair by four-thirty. We'd break for a half hour—after about an hour's work—we'd break to have a bite of breakfast before they put the jaw on. And I think we were ready to shoot at about eight. So it was a chore.

**SS:** The makeup must have been difficult to wear.

**PW:** Ken Chase is a great makeup man. He did my makeup. One of the funnier things that happened then is that I was booked to do Carson, and we were shooting late. I said, "You know, I'm just going to go straight over in makeup." So I called Doc; I said, "Doc, can you play 'Here's That Rainy Day?'" So I came out, and what I wanted was a little table with a checkered tablecloth—you know, a typical Sinatra set. We didn't let Johnny know, and I came out in makeup and sang. (Laughs) It's one of my favorite pieces of tape.

*Continued on page 96*

**Robert Shields and Lorene Yarnell (then at the height of their fame as mimes) joined Paul Williams in *THE WILD WEST REVISITED* (1979).**

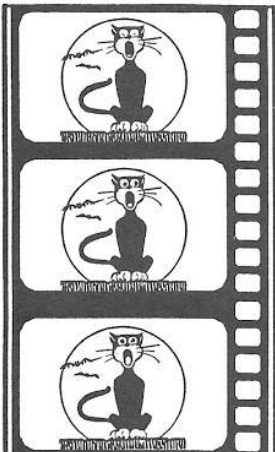






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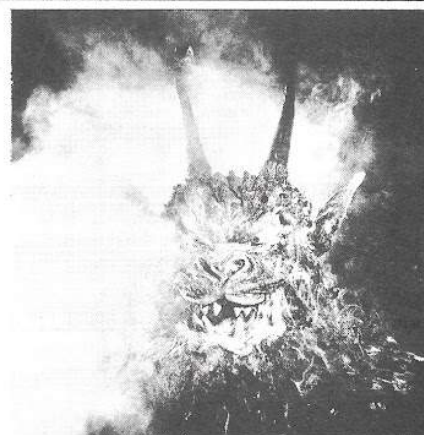
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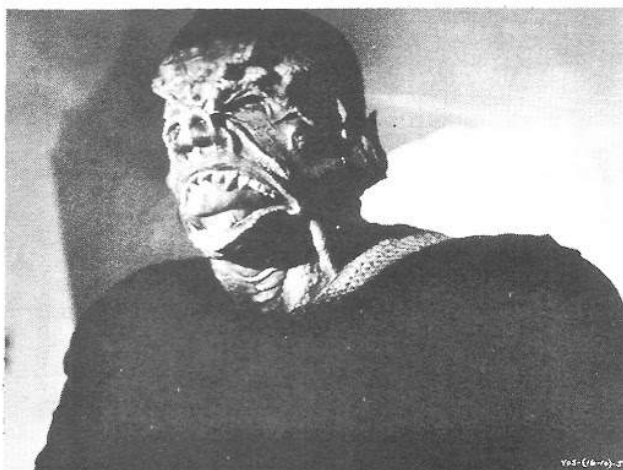
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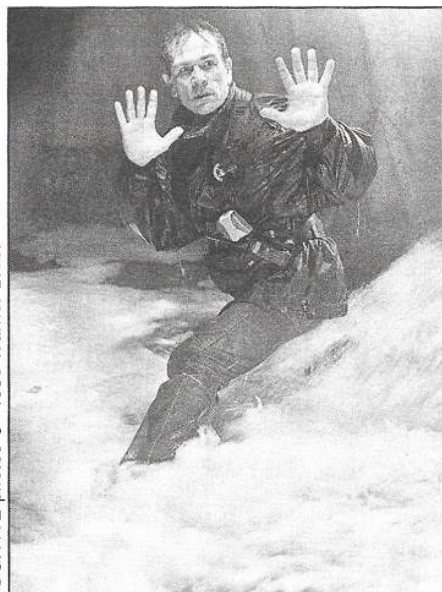
# the NEWS HOUND

Welcome back to the Hound's den, where once again he's dug up a fistful of flashes from the news wire.

What's the most monstrous scoop on the horrific Hollywood beat? Is it De Niro's casting as the Monster in Coppola's *FRANKENSTEIN*? Is it JURASSIC PARK's bid to stomp the summer cinematic competition? No, it's Universal's upcoming *BARNEY THE DINOSAUR* movie! This disturbing purple version of Bruce the Shark is scheduled to star in his own warm, lovable feature sometime next year.

Other news that's nearly as exciting: Agent 007 will be back in a new United Artists adventure, with an original screenplay by Michael France (cowriter of this summer's Sly Stallone epic *CLIFFHANGER*). No title or casting news as yet, but producer Barbara Broccoli (daughter of Cubby) has "conferred" with Timothy Dalton . . . Mike Nichols directs Jack Nicholson and Michelle Pfeiffer in *WOLF*, a werewolf story coming soon from Columbia . . . James Bond meets Emma Peel on the Dark Continent in Bruce Beresford's Universal production *A GOOD MAN IN AFRICA*, featuring Sean Connery, Diana Rigg, and John Lithgow . . . Tim Burton will soon shoot his black-and-white biography of Ed Wood for Disney. Joining Johnny Depp (in the title role) are Christian Slater, Bill Murray, and Martin Landau (as Bela Lugosi!).

*Tommy Lee Jones faces off against . . .*



FUGITIVE photos © 1993 Warner Bros.

Meanwhile, truck out to the twelplex and get in line for July releases *ROBOCOP 3*; *RISING SUN*, starring Sean Connery; *HOCUS POCUS*, Disney's (hopefully) bewitching Bette Midler comedy; and *CONEHEADS*, a film designed to be viewed while consuming mass quantities of dubious theatre food. August audiences can catch *THE FUGITIVE* starring Harrison Ford as Dr. Richard Kimble, *SO I MARRIED AN AXE MURDERER!* with Mike Myers, Woody Allen's *MANHATTAN MURDER MYSTERY*, and *JASON GOES TO HELL: THE FINAL FRIDAY*. (Sure, pull the other paw!) Angus Scrimm and his "silver spheres" clank again in *PHANTASM 3*, due on Halloween or sooner. Tim Burton's *NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS* arrives in December, preceded by a Thanksgiving feast with some favorite fiends in *ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES*.

Independent productions awaiting release dates and/or distributors include a trio of vampire flicks: *JUGULAR WINE: A VAMPIRE ODYSSEY* features a fanged female in Alaska who prefers blood to blubber; Trimark's *TALE OF A VAMPIRE* stars Julian Sands as one of the deadly undead; and *CRONOS* is an imaginative, multi-award-winning Mexican feature about an ancient timepiece that bestows eternal life with unfortunate vampiric side effects. Also awaiting Stateside release: a new production of Dickens' *THE MYSTERY OF EDWIN DROOD* starring Robert (HANNAY) Powell, currently touring the British provinces in the musical *SHERLOCK HOLMES*. Other productions waiting to dazzle us include *COLD SWEAT*, a clammy Canadian thriller featuring Ben "Barnabas" Cross; Stephen King's *RITA HAYWORTH AND THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION* from Castle Rock; and the self-explanatory *ED AND HIS DEAD MOTHER* from ITC Entertainment.

More projects in various stages of production: *SHERLOCK HOLMES VS. DRACULA* from Richard (PSYCHO II) Franklin, stars Timothy Dalton and Christopher Walken . . . John Waters' *SERIAL MOM* top-lines Kathleen Turner and Sam Waterston . . . Hot property Sharon Stone will again be on view in Carolco's *MANHATTAN GHOST STORY* . . . Tom Holland, of *CHILD'S PLAY* fame, directs the "Richard Bachman" (Stephen King) story

*THINNER* . . . In development are two feature-film updates of 60s TV shows: *BEWITCHED*, to be produced and directed by Penny Marshall, and a big-budget *LOST IN SPACE* from Paramount . . . Seriously dysfunctional families will be found both in Concorde's *STEPMONSTER* starring Corey Haim, and in *BRAINDEAD*, in which the bite from an evil monkey turns a man's mother into a zombie. Oh, for simple codependency.

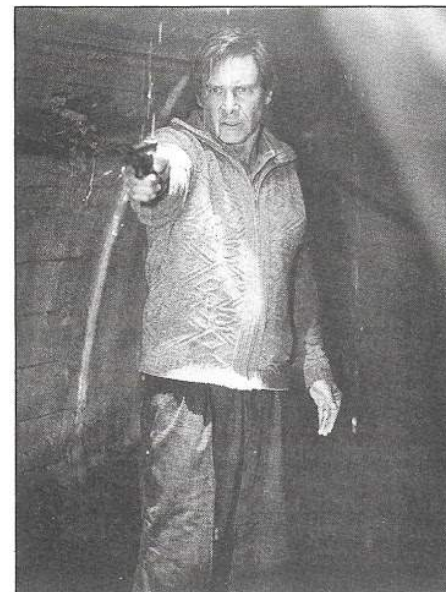
Switching channels to TV news . . . ABC brings an aura of decay to Saturday mornings this fall with *TALES FROM THE CRYPTKEEPER*, an animated version of HBO's skeletal series . . . *WILD PALMS* producer Bruce Wagner is developing an offbeat miniseries about 50s America entitled *CUL DE SAC*. The ABC project is described as "the weird underbelly of *OZZIE AND HARRIET* and *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER*." Francis Ford Coppola serves as executive producer. His underbelly will not be shown.

Japan continues to evidence the weird underbelly of TV commercial production. First there was a series of *TWIN PEAKS* ads (starring the original cast and directed by David Lynch) for the local soft drink Georgia Coffee—a damn fine beverage. Now, footage of Alfred Hitchcock is being used to sell Toyotas. A Japanese actor is dubbing Hitch's voice, having him pitch Celicas to the tune of "Funeral March for a Marionette." Perhaps these advertising geniuses would like to step into the shower for a moment.

Your local video store will be a source of suspense this summer. Already on the rental racks are *BRAM*

*Continued on page 22*

*. . . Harrison Ford as THE FUGITIVE.*



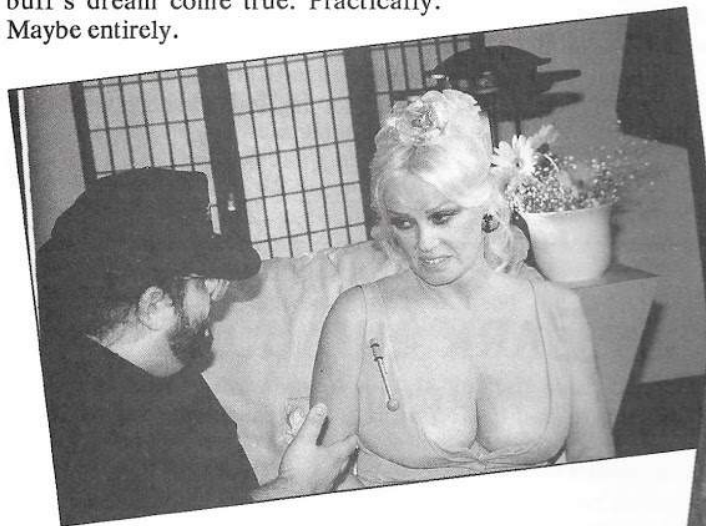


# ATTACK OF THE THRILLER "B"

Photos © Bennett King Pictures Productions, Inc.

Let a movie buff imagine his dream picture, his all-star variation on those venerable "B" films of yore, and likely the cast will include many (make that all) of the following actors and actresses: Beverly Garland, Jack Larson, Noel Neill, Russell Johnson, Patrick Macnee, Kenneth Tobey, Mamie Van Doren, Huntz Hall, Connie Stevens, Macdonald Carey, Anne Francis, Tony Curtis, Cesar Romero, Julie Adams, Adam West, Yvonne Craig, Dwayne Hickman, Esther Williams, Mike Connors, Barbara Eden, Alan Young, Lisa Loring, Chuck McCann, David Carradine, Eve Brent, Betsy Palmer, Spanky McFarland, Vince Edwards, and Elinor Donahue.

Well, dutiful dreamers, KING B: A LIFE IN THE MOVIES, currently before the cameras from Bennett King Pictures Productions, Inc. (and how's that for a company name?) is a buff's dream come true. Practically. Maybe entirely.



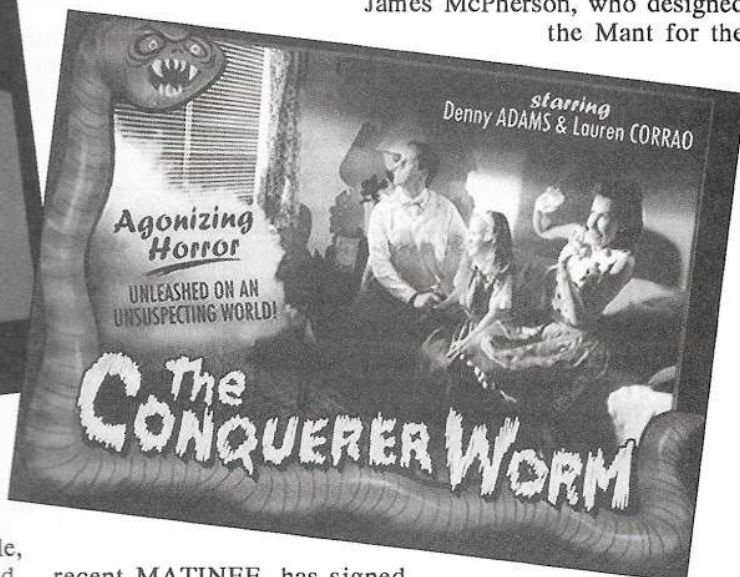
Mike Valerio, writer and director of this mock documentary of the imaginary Bennett King, filmmaker extraordinaire in the quick-buck tradition of Castle, Corman, Cohen, and Wood, has already gotten Garland, Larson, Adams, Allen, Macnee, Brent, Donahue, Edwards, Hickman, Johnson, McFarland, Loring, McCann, Palmer, and Van Doren (pictured directly above with Valerio) in the can. The remaining genre icons all have cameos slated for them in the script, but have yet to commit themselves to this level of happy insanity.

KING B traces the rise and fall of the Hollywood low-budget programmer through the eyes of writer/producer/director King (played by Moe Ginsberg), creator of such disposable classics as BUG-EYED MONSTER; BROADWAY BIKER GIRL; COUNT BLOODLUST, VAMPIRE; THE GORILLA KILLER; and NAUGHTY NAZI PRISON GIRLS. The idea for the film was born of Valerio's affection for the great "B" films of his childhood, and his respect and admiration for the talented men and women who toiled on the fringes of the Hollywood studio system. "Anyone associated with the Hollywood 'B' film of the 40s, 50s, and 60s is bound to see little pieces of themselves or someone they knew in Bennett King," claims Valerio. "It's a tribute to talent . . . and tenacity."

The director has nothing but praise for his cast. "I love working with these veteran actors. They're total pros. They not only show up on time, they know their lines, hit their marks, and usually nail their part in a take or two. Watching them work is nothing but pure pleasure."

KING B has a tip-top line-up of talent behind the camera as well as before it. Valerio is the award-winning former Director of Special Projects for NBC and scripter for the upcoming actioner STEALTH FORCE. Writer/producer Steve Schindler (AMERICA'S MOST WANTED, SIGHTINGS) is KING B's executive producer, with Emmy Award winner Chuck Stepner acting as coproducer. Schindler acts, too: In KING B, he's half of the comedy duo Fox & Crow, stars (with Kogar the Gorilla) of Bennett King's GHOST OF A CHANCE. The rest of the crew includes staffers from NBC, ABC, CBS, the Disney Channel, and Roger Corman's Concorde Productions.

James McPherson, who designed the Mant for the



recent MATINEE, has signed on to create KING B's creatures and makeup effects. Authenticity arrives courtesy of Technical Consultant Bob Burns, who, like the film's guest stars, was there when it happened. Among the films in which Burns had a hand (or claw): THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED (1956) and INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN (1957).

"Mike's wonderful script really took me back to my early days," says Burns, "when I was working for 'B' movie makers like Roger Corman, William Castle, Sam Arkoff, and Paul Blaisdell. KING B is a reminder that they really don't make 'em like that anymore."

According to Stepner, "The stars are having a blast. They love the story and the characters and they understand that KING B: A LIFE IN THE MOVIES is really a valentine to them and the films they've created. When Beverly Garland finished her scenes with us, she took out a pen and autographed Mike's copy of the script. She wrote: 'Thanks for not forgetting.' That is what the KING B experience is all about."

—Drew Sullivan



Continued from page 20

STOKER'S DRACULA from Columbia/Tri-Star and BODY OF EVIDENCE from MGM/UA. Along with the release of Joe Dante's MATINEE, MCA/Universal has served up some vintage treats: the first-time releases of THE MOLE PEOPLE, TARANTULA, THE DEADLY MANTIS, and THE NIGHT WALKER. Also premiering from MCA is Bob Hope's classic 1940 horror comedy THE GHOST BREAKERS. (Terrific news, but where's THE CAT AND THE CANARY?)

Home-video releases in July include the Jules Verne inspired 800 LEAGUES DOWN THE AMAZON from Roger Corman's New Horizons; HOME-WRECKER, a science-thriller from Paramount (originally produced for the Sci-Fi Channel); and the Live Home Video release of Neil Jordan's masterful hit THE CRYING GAME, starring Stephen Rea and Miranda Richardson.

Fans of Ray Harryhausen, the dean of stop-motion animation, will soon be able to own a little piece of fantasy-film history. Harryhausen will create a series of original sculptures to be mar-



Kathy Najimy, Bette Midler, and Sarah Jessica Parker are in for a devil of a time as three witches in Disney's HOCUS POCUS.

keted by Dark Horse Productions as model kits. Willis O'Brien's KING KONG is the first kit in the series, and will be available in the late fall.

Time for the Hound to retreat, but he'll be back in the fall.



**The News Hound**

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# LOST WHIRL

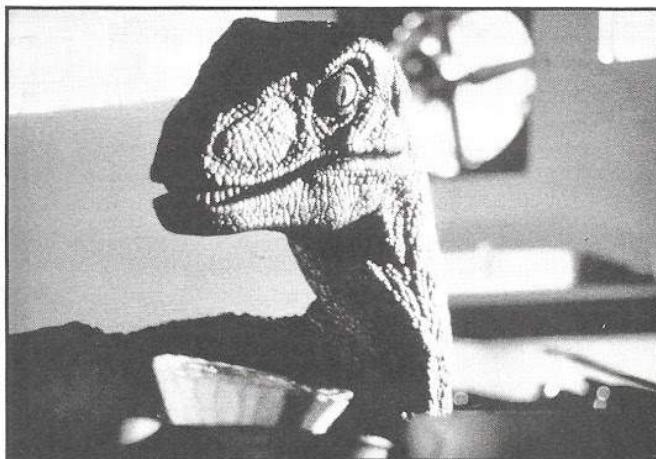
## BY DREW SULLIVAN

Forget the damn mosquitoes. This summer those nasty little pains have been replaced by much bigger ones: Dinosaurs are everywhere! They're on television, in the nauseatingly cuddly form of that Mesozoic grape, Barney. They're in magazines, including one, *Dinosaur Times*, devoted entirely to the cumbrous critters. And they're in the movies, with director Steven Spielberg's JURASSIC PARK (coproduced by Universal and Amblin) and producer Roger Corman's CARNOSAUR leading the pack. Bringing up the rear is an as-yet-unscheduled TV miniseries version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912).

Spielberg's saurian thriller (and you'd have to be extinct not to know this already) is a \$60-million adaptation of the 1990 Michael Crichton best-seller of the same name. The flick stars Richard Attenborough (who more often can be found directing movies that are themselves dinosaurs) as John Hammond, a millionaire industrialist who has financed a theme park featuring living, breathing, munching prehistoric monsters. Attenborough's costars include Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum, and SEINFELD's Wayne Knight. Also on hand are a Triceratops, a Brachiosaurus, a few Velociraptors, and an especially nasty Tyrannosaurus Rex, courtesy of George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic and a team of special-effects whizzes.

Dern's mother, actress Diane Ladd, leads the human cast of Corman's CARNOSAUR, directed by Adam Simon and based on a novel by Harry Adam Knight (a pen name for John Brosnan, the author of 1978's sci-fi study *Future Tense*). In some areas, CARNOSAUR will beat JURASSIC PARK into theatres; in others, Spielberg gets first crack at dinomaniacs. Like JURASSIC PARK, Corman's Concorde Pictures production features a rampaging Rex, but its biggest thunder comes from a lizard called Deinonychus, which has a nasty habit of shredding its victims.

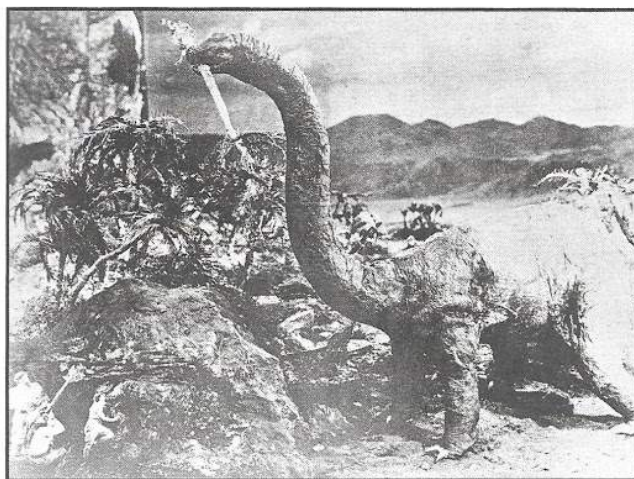
The TV version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic dinosaur tale has been all but ignored by mags eager to put



Not the mama! A 'raptor plays peek-a-boo in Steven Spielberg's JURASSIC PARK.

anything smelling of dino in their pages—but with good reason. One: they probably haven't heard of it. Two: the miniseries, split into two parts and entitled THE LOST WORLD and RETURN TO THE LOST WORLD, frankly stinks. Produced by Harmony Gold, who only recently (and despite valiant work by Christopher Lee) trashed Conan Doyle's immortal detective in SHERLOCK HOLMES: INCIDENT AT VICTORIA FALLS and SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE LEADING LADY, the new adventures feature prehistoric creatures that place Barney, by comparison, on the level of a Ray Harryhausen stop-motion wonder. Directed by Timothy Bond, and with special effects by Image Quest (whose budget must have been used for carfare), THE LOST WORLD employs only the bare bones of the original plot, with Professor George Edward Challenger (John Rhys-Davies) and his intrepid band of explorers (including David Warner as Professor Summerlee and Eric McCormack as Ned Malone) journeying to Africa (not the novel's South America) and finding a strange, isolated plateau inhabited by hand puppets. If you're looking for something to rival the feeble monstrosities of UNKNOWN ISLAND (1948) and THE LAND UNKNOWN (1957)—two movies that should have taken their shared titular adjective to heart—search no further. THE LOST WORLD wasn't quite lost enough.

*The cast of 1993's THE LOST WORLD stare in amazement at something they never see in their version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's venerable tale: a complete, full-sized dinosaur (courtesy of Willis O'Brien's wizardry in the 1925 production).*





# LAST KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

GALE  
SONDERGAARD

INTERVIEWED BY  
BOZE HADLEIGH



1474



Gale Sondergaard (1899–1985) won the first Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress, in 1936. She won it for the rather forgettable ANTHONY ADVERSE. A fine dramatic actress, Sondergaard often stole scenes from bigger stars, such as Bette Davis. (Who can forget Sondergaard as the Eurasian woman in spangles and vitriol, glaring malevolently at Bette in *THE LETTER*?)

In typical Hollywood fashion, Norwegian/American Sondergaard became best known as an “exotic,” and for the campy role of the Spider Woman. (Most of her fan mail in later years was from young fans of her two Spider pictures.) In 1949, however, Washington and Hollywood cut short Sondergaard’s career. A political activist, she had the misfortune to be an outspoken liberal married to Herbert Biberman, one of the Hollywood Ten. For the next 20 years, she didn’t work before the cameras, wasting her thespic prime until television, in the form of *IT TAKES A THIEF*, was ready for her. By then, Sondergaard had become something of a cult figure. Well-liked by many, she was nonetheless “hard to cast” and an embarrassing reminder of Tinseltown’s cowardice of not so long ago.

The actress eschewed interviewers who attempted to dwell on her long-ago career; she refused to feel sorry for herself in print. Grateful to new fans for their interest in her, she nevertheless had no desire to stamp herself as a one-role performer. She was also weary of retelling the story behind the politicking and blacklisting, and, though far from a recluse, was generally unavailable to the public. At the behest of a movie-buff-magazine publisher, I repeatedly tried in vain to obtain an interview with Sondergaard—twice in the late 70s, three times in 1981. Finally, in 1984, her health declining, she agreed to speak with me by phone: a trial run. Soon after, we met for lunch at the home of a mutual friend in Santa Barbara, and then repaired to the sunny veranda to conduct her first interview in “three or four years.”

However, by 1984 the movie magazine had changed hands, and the interview didn’t see print until 1985, when an avant-garde Japanese magazine ironically published only the portions about the legendary Spider Woman (along with a discourse by Manuel Puig, author of *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*). Here, for the first time, is the full text of Gale Sondergaard’s last interview.

*Scarlet Street: What was the impact, if any, of winning the first Supporting Actress Oscar?*

**Gale Sondergaard:** I think, if the award ever did anyone any good, it wasn’t me. Because a supporting award in no way enhances a career or salary in the way that Best Actress does. Despite all the publicity from my being the first in that category—and high time, you know! All those excellent supporting performances, which often made a picture, went unrecognized until 1936. And except for 1936, I’m very bad with dates—so please don’t ask me.

*SS: Didn’t ANTHONY ADVERSE and the Oscar boost your career at all?*

**GS:** Yes, but as an exotic type. I had a certain range, and so they cast me in supporting roles. That can be a trap, because if you win for supporting, they decide you’re a wonderful supporter to their

stars, and you get those very good but smaller roles. Fortunately, I was never grandly ambitious, you know. I was not like my friend Bette. I liked to fit in to some extent, and to excel, too. My ego’s always been healthy—not inflated. Then, too, I was not a beauty. And though I was young, well, there must have been something about me that spoke of maturity, for I often played older—which also meant that once I was older, I didn’t get to play!

*SS: Everyone remembers you from THE LETTER, although you’re only on screen for a few minutes. What are your memories of that classic film?*

**GS:** I remember meeting Mr. [W. Somerset] Maugham, before the picture was ever made, and he was very tart-mouthed, like a man who habitually sucked limes or lemons. But he took to me right away, and I to him. He told wonderful stories of where he had traveled, and although he deprecated many of his friends, he was . . . endearing, somehow. He badly wanted to be liked. He was vulnerable, and I have always liked vulnerable people.

*SS: What did he think of THE LETTER?*

**GS:** I met him many years later, but he was somewhat distracted . . . there was no opportunity to ask. In fact, I don’t think I thought to ask! It already seemed so long ago. You might ask Bette about it, because I understand they corresponded after she did *OF HUMAN BONDAGE*.

*SS: Did you have doubts about the role, or fitting the look?*

**GS:** It was a big help that I hardly spoke! Otherwise the mystery and allure would have been gone, fast! I just did my best to be evil, to think evil, and hoped it wouldn’t seem foolish. I think the picture was photographed beautifully. I haven’t seen it in years now, but I’d enjoy seeing it again.

*SS: You must feel a sense of loss, watching many of your films, since you’re one of the few performers left from that era.*

**GS:** That’s true. But really, it’s more like revisiting old friends. Because once you do go your separate ways, your paths rarely cross again. And if they do, you’re virtually strangers. Watching a picture, you see each other as you

*Boze Hadleigh is the author of The Lavender Screen, The Vinyl Closet, and Conversations With My Elders. His latest book, Hollywood, Babble On, is due out in 1994.*





**LEFT:** Gale Sondergaard was the physical personification of evil in 1940's *THE LETTER*, though she was more sinned against than sinning—it was Bette Davis who murdered Sondergaard's British husband. **BELOW:** Sherlock Holmes (Basil Rathbone), Adrea Spedding (Gale Sondergaard), and Dr. Watson (Nigel Bruce) were hardly this chummy during the course of 1944's *THE SPIDER WOMAN*.

were, when you had something in common . . . it's very pleasant. A little eerie, I admit, but pleasant.

**SS:** What about watching performers, in your own and other movies, who helped terminate careers via the witch hunts of the 1950s?

**GS:** First of all, it began before the 1950s; it's always described as the 1950s, but even before the war, the machinery was being formed. Mr. Truman had a role in it. Whether he had

any idea how it would . . . how tragically it would end, I don't know. It's much more complicated than is generally believed. It began with too much government, too much governmental interference in people's lives—and I will say that any amount of governmental interference is too much! If you want to learn something of how it happened, [Lillian] Hellman's book *Scoundrel Time* is very good. Particularly the introduction, which she did not write. It's short . . . I know that young people read less than we did, in general. It was more than just Mr. McCarthy, although he used it to become prominent.

**SS:** As did Richard Nixon . . .

**GS:** That he even became president . . . (Shakes head)

**SS:** Did you ever think at the time that a Richard Nixon could become the president, or, conversely, that McCarthy would go down in history as a villain?

**GS:** I hope I don't disappoint you, but really we were not looking into a crystal ball. We were more concerned with survival, with the next days, weeks, and months. Of course, when Mr. Nixon finally became president, I was bitterly disappointed.

**SS:** Another red-baiter was Ronald Reagan. Did his political victories surprise you, after Nixon's?

**GS:** Somewhere along the line, you stop being truly surprised. It's always a shock, but somewhere in middle age, you realize that we—as a whole—never learn from our mistakes, that the most unbelievable or appalling things can happen anywhere and at any time.

**SS:** What is it like watching actors who informed or lied?

**GS:** It is difficult. For me, it interferes with enjoying a performance or a picture; I know it shouldn't. I rarely view a picture with, for example, Mr. Reagan . . . or Robert

*Continued on page 28*





# THE SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK

## BY MICHAEL BRUNAS

Has anyone ever noticed in this feminist, politically correct age that in discussions about actors, the term "ham" has always been restricted to the male of the species? Although there have been dozens of actresses who could chew up the scenery as hungrily as their male counterparts (several of them winning Oscars for their troubles), critics have been extremely reluctant to identify them as hams. If Charles Laughton was a ham, what did that make, for instance, Agnes Moorehead? Bette Davis' legendary status is well-deserved, but she indulged in some roof-raising hamminess in her later vehicles. (1962's *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* is a sterling example, allowing arch-rival Joan Crawford to quietly steal the movie.) Gloria Swanson's extravagantly praised performance as Norma Desmond in *SUNSET BOULEVARD* (1950), one of the great American films, is one that belongs between two slices of bread, preferably with cheese. To call an actor a ham isn't necessarily a putdown; some of our best actors (John Barrymore leaps to mind) were hams.

Which brings us to our female ham of the hour, Gale Sondergaard. The screen's foremost Dragon Lady was adept at scene-stealing whether playing dour, spinster housekeepers or cruel, cunning women of mystery. Her waspish, first-ladyish charms were the weapons used to lure unsuspecting male victims to their deaths in such movies as *THE SPIDER WOMAN* (1944), in which she matched wits with Basil Rathbone's Sherlock Holmes (who dubbed her, almost admiringly, a "female Moriarty"). Sondergaard, with her cool demeanor and rich, confident strain of theatricality, could hold her own against any male heavy of her day. The actress practiced the art of villainy in many a big-budget feature, but she was perhaps at her most memorable in Universal's *THE SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK* (1946), a film which, incidentally, bears no relation to the earlier Holmes adventure.

The movie occupies a unique position in the canon of Universal horror movies of the 40s—right at the bottom of the heap. Well, not at the very bottom: The awesome vapidity of *JUNGLE WOMAN* (1944) makes it a worthy contender for Universal's worst; *THE CAT CREEPS* (1946), with its dreary

and mechanical old-dark-house bromides, certainly places in the finals as well. And, of course, everyone knows the saga of *THE BRUTE MAN* (1946), a movie so depressingly wretched that the studio pitched it to PRC for a quick sale rather than face the embarrassment of releasing it under their own banner.

Unlike these exercises in ennui, *THE SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK* emerges as something of a camp classic. (I remember a newspaper interview with director Mike Nichols, conducted long before the advent of the VCR, in which he was setting his alarm clock in order to catch the film on a late-night television broadcast.) The movie has taken some well-deserved pot shots over the years, even from Gale Sondergaard herself, who was painfully aware of its reputation.

The plot is more creaky than creepy. Jean Kingsley (Brenda Joyce), a big-city career woman on the brink of a nervous

breakdown, is prescribed by her doctor to take a rest deep in the sticks. She arrives by bus in the heart of California cattle country (dressed in mink!), taking the position of secretary and companion to a blind dowager, Zenobia Dollard (Sondergaard). Her employer seems amiable, even though she occupies the biggest and gloomiest house in town and has Rondo Hatton as a domestic.

Soon the town is in an uproar, as the farmers discover that their livestock is being killed off by an untraceable poison. Jean, sensing something sinister lurking beneath her employer's Victorian finery, suspects the blind woman. (Zenobia, it seems, goes through paid companions the way a spider goes

through flies.) The local yokels—including the jolly old grocer who prophetically claims, "She's always doing something for the kids"—will have none of Jean's misgivings. The next morning, one of the kids dies from poisoning.

The film's final reel finds Jean hopelessly ensnared in the Spider Woman's web. Her blindness at last revealed to be a sham, Zenobia guides her companion through a secret greenhouse housing a carnivorous vampire plant into whose maw is fed live spiders supplemented with human blood. In unknow-



Rondo Hatton and Gale Sondergaard brew up a little Universal mayhem in *THE SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK* (1946). Sondergaard was not repeating her Adrea Spedding role from *THE SPIDER WOMAN*, though the title hinted otherwise.

*Continued on page 99*





Angelo Rossitto played Sondergaard's pygmy accomplice in a murder plot borrowed for 1944's *THE SPIDER WOMAN* from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*.



Gale Sondergaard played second fiddle to Boris Karloff in 1944's *THE CLIMAX*, one of Universal's rare color horror movies. Most audiences waited impatiently for the sluggish film to fulfill its titular promise.



In 1946, Sondergaard played a psychic housekeeper in *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES*. Handy, because the house came complete with Lou Costello and Marjorie Reynolds as ghosts. Pictured: Lynne Baggett, John Shelton, Sondergaard, Costello, Binnie Barnes, Reynolds, and Bud Abbott.

*Continued  
from page 26*

Taylor or Adolphe Menjou.

SS: *You appeared with Hope and Crosby in ROAD TO RIO.*

GS: That was fun. I enjoyed playing comedy. You know, I made several pictures with Bob Hope. I was also in *THE CAT AND THE CANARY* and *MY FAVORITE BLONDE* . . .

SS: *You also acted with Abbott and Costello in THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES.*

GS: As the mysterious housekeeper, of course. (Laughs)

SS: *In 1949, did you think it would be so very long before you worked again?*

GS: No.

SS: *Some performers did come back in the 1960s.*

GS: The more tenacious ones . . . I sort of lost the spirit to fight. You don't fight and fight without paying a price—and my background instilled in me that I could survive without a career. For a man, well, he's more defined by his work, or he thinks he is.

SS: *When you finally returned to your acting career, did you think it would be a renaissance for you?*

GS: No. I wasn't that foolish! I knew, for one thing, that I was old, which is not the Hollywood way. I knew I'd never been a great star; I couldn't do what Bette or Joan were doing, and perhaps I was somewhat lazy about chasing opportunities. Believe me, I wasn't eating my heart out over not working!

SS: *What were you doing with yourself?*

GS: *Living!*

SS: *You were also becoming known as the Spider Woman.*

GS: Yes, and it was rather fun. It added a lighter feeling to my image, and it was nice hearing from young people. I could have wished—if this doesn't sound ungrateful or demanding—that more young people could have been aware of the witch hunts . . . or cared, once they found out. I'll tell you: There was some publicity—I forget for which show—about my political times and the results, and of course the term "witch hunts" was used quite a bit. As a result, I received several letters from younger fans, asking the titles of the films in which I had portrayed a witch. This was 10, 12 years ago. Maybe things have improved; a lot of things get better during adversity.

SS: *What was it like for you, playing the Spider Woman?*

GS: Easy, because the characterization was up to me; she was not intricately conceived. Frankly, it was something to help pay the bills. I knew it wasn't art. I certainly didn't think it would outlast all my pictures other than *THE LETTER*. And I'm not sure that even *THE LETTER* would be so esteemed now, if not for Bette's performance. It's rather dated . . . corny.

SS: *What was it like working with Basil Rathbone on THE SPIDER WOMAN?*

GS: I enjoyed working with Basil Rathbone. He was a gentleman at all times—courteous and helpful, an excellent technician. It was while shooting that film that I enjoyed the refreshment of afternoon tea served in the dressing room of Nigel Bruce. They were fun and interesting to be with.

SS: *Is it a trial for a supporting player to fall under another's shadow in film after film?*

GS: Not if you perceive the alternative as not working. You see, I was in between the stars and character actors. So my name was often known; it was certainly known in Hollywood—before and after the politics.

SS: *Is Hollywood just a state of mind now?*

GS: Now, then, whenever . . . Hollywood is a state of panic!

SS: *Do you miss working?*

GS: Not at my age, dear. I've contributed whatever I had to contribute.

SS: *What about the tragic loss of a career like Mr. Biberman's?*

GS: More is being written about that era these days, and about the individuals. Of course, Herbert was a great writer and director, and a great contributor—he helped found the Directors Guild. When we came out here in 1935, we both had high hopes . . . but it's too long ago to remember, now.

SS: *Do you admire Jane Fonda, who went out on a limb, at the height of her popularity, for her political beliefs?*

GS: Of course I do! I admire anyone who sticks her neck out. She had every-



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thing to lose, and nearly did. I'm happy for her—as if she needs anyone's sympathy! Her popularity is a meaningful indication that the country is less vindictive now.

*SS: Did most of your Hollywood friends desert you after you and your husband were blacklisted?*

*GS: Yes, most. Most of our associates and acquaintances . . .*

*SS: How about, say, Bette Davis?*

*GS: Young man, I don't intend to put people on the line or judge them—unless they went out of their way to harm people, like Mr. [John] Wayne or Mr. Menjou. I will say this: Bette is a loyal Democrat, and is apparently one of the few stars of that era who has not been invited to Mr. Reagan's home.*

*SS: Have you heard about the novel The Kiss of the Spider Woman?*

*GS: You might well laugh at this, but when someone first mentioned that book to me, I became rather upset. No one mentioned that it was fiction—and I thought someone had written a biography of me! How presumptuous! Of me, I mean! I understand that neither the book nor the picture has anything to do with arachnids.*

*SS: How do you rate your post-1969 work?*

*GS: It was enjoyable; I enjoyed doing it, and that's what matters.*

*SS: You've said that a big percentage of your fans in recent years have been gay men. Why is that?*

*GS: But also lesbians! Many of them say so, in their letters. Some only hint at it. I honestly don't think most of the other kind of men are very interested in any sort of Spider Woman. (Laughs) Perhaps it's scary for them—or they prefer to see a blonde, instead. And certainly you know that Miss Davis is a cult figure, now, with gay men.*

*SS: Does it bother you that there have been rumors about your own sexuality?*

*GS: What sexuality? (Laughs) Regardless, sexuality is natural. Famous people are always wondered about, though it never used to be written about—not what went on in the bedroom. I'll tell you this: I've never been very conventional. I was not traditionally pretty or girlish. Often, I portrayed strong, domineering characters. This can lead to rumors. But also—don't forget—I loved my husband. Very much. So . . . ?*

*SS: Has your personal life compensated for your lost years as an actress?*

*GS: Nothing compensates for anything else. But having had some good friends and partners, and various interests outside and above myself, that has been satisfying—even though I've seldom been content.*

*SS: What has made you content?*

*GS: Knowing we were on the side that would eventually win out.*



# BROADWAY'S KISS

BY SEAN & FARRELL

*If things become unbearable . . . go someplace else.*  
—Edward T. Bowden  
*The Dungeon of the Heart*

As far as Broadway is concerned, the spirit of the Spider Woman lives on! *KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN*, a musical based on the novel by the late Manuel Puig, swept the Tony awards on June 6, 1993. In addition to the show winning for Best Musical, Chita Rivera took home a Tony for Best Actress in a Musical, Brent Carver got the Best Actor nod, and Anthony Crivello won for Best Featured Actor. Terrence McNally won a Tony for his book, John Kander (music) and Fred Ebb (lyrics) received a Tony for Best Score, and Florence Klotz copped Best Costume Design.

Directed by Harold Prince, *KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN* opened at the Broadhurst Theatre on May 3, 1993, after five years as a work in progress. The play takes its story from Puig's 1976 novel, set in a grim Latin American prison in which Valentine, a Marxist revolutionary (Anthony Crivello), and Molina, a gay window dresser (Brent Carver), become uneasy cellmates. They withstand their inhumane treatment by escaping into Molina's romantic dream world of old black-and-white movies.

The mysterious, alluring Aurora (Chita Rivera), who once appeared in a motion picture as the death-dealing Spider Woman, dominates the show's lavish musical numbers, which represent Molina's fantasy realm. (In the novel, she is a symbol of the "B" movies beloved by Puig; a character inspired by Gale Sondergaard, who spun her silken web in such classics as 1944's *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SPIDER WOMAN* and 1946's *THE SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES*

BACK.) Through their moments of escapism, Valentine and Molina form a bond, realizing that each needs the other in order to survive.

Following a disastrous premiere workshop production in 1990, *KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN* underwent fine-tuning by its creative team. The show went on to play Toronto and London, winning the 1992 *London Evening Standard* Award for Best Musical, before hitting Broadway.

This is not the first time Puig's novel has seen life as a play. The author, who died of a heart attack in 1990, wrote a stage version that ran for several years in Brazil, Mexico, and Spain, as well as in London and New York. (In this nonmusical production, Valentin and Molina were the sole characters, Molina's fantasy world existing only in his monologues.)

Almost 50 years after she first matched wits with Sherlock Holmes, the poisonous spirit of the Spider Woman lives on!



*Chita Rivera as the Spider Woman*



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# Better Holmes and Watson

## The Granada Series Reviewed

**THE RESIDENT PATIENT**  
**Adaptation: Derek Marlowe**  
**Direction: David Carson**

*We talked of Sherlock Holmes, which I was amazed to hear Dr. Doyle declare to be not a good work. "Why, Sherlock Holmes was merely a mechanical creature," he exclaimed, "not a man of flesh and blood—and easy to create because he was soulless. One story by Edgar Allan Poe would be worth a dozen such."*

—Mortimer Menpes, *War Impressions: Being a Record in Colour*

Mr. Blessington awakens to an eerie cry in the night. "Sutton," cries the voice. "Sutton!" Nervously, the portly man of business clamors out of bed and tiptoes quietly down the stairs, where he discovers, in his candlelit foyer, three grim figures in black standing beside a coffin. Blessington approaches the coffin and gingerly lifts the lid. To his horror, he finds himself—alive!—within the box. Understandably bewildered, Blessington beats a hasty retreat to the safety of his bed chamber. Slamming the door shut, leaning breathlessly against it, he is chilled to the very marrow when he hears the cry "Sutton" behind him and, facing

the bed, finds himself staring in mind-numbing terror at—himself.

He has, of course, been dreaming.

\*\*\*

This disorienting prologue to Granada TV's *THE RESIDENT PATIENT*, with its startling, suffocating suggestion of premature burial, smacks more of America's own Edgar Allan Poe than of England's Arthur Conan Doyle, but it makes for a powerful start to the story at hand. Later in the episode, Dr. Percy Trevelyan (who resides with patient Blessington) is visited by an aged gentleman suffering from catalepsy—that favored ailment of characters destined to open their orbs six feet under—and once more we're back in Poe territory. All that's missing is Vincent Price as star and Roger Corman as director!

"The Adventure of the Resident Patient" was published in the August 1893 edition of *The Strand Magazine* and in the 1893 collection *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. Interestingly, though the story doesn't include Blessington's nightmare, the version appearing in *The Memoirs* does contain a reference to Poe, which perhaps served as inspiration for Granada. The pertinent remark comes during the famous sequence in which Holmes, merely by observing Dr. Watson's gestures and facial expressions (what today would be called his "body language"), reads his friend's thoughts on such diverse topics as General Gor-



Jeremy Brett

don, Henry Ward Beecher, picture frames, and the Civil War—much in the manner in which Poe's Dupin reads his companion's thoughts in 1841's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."

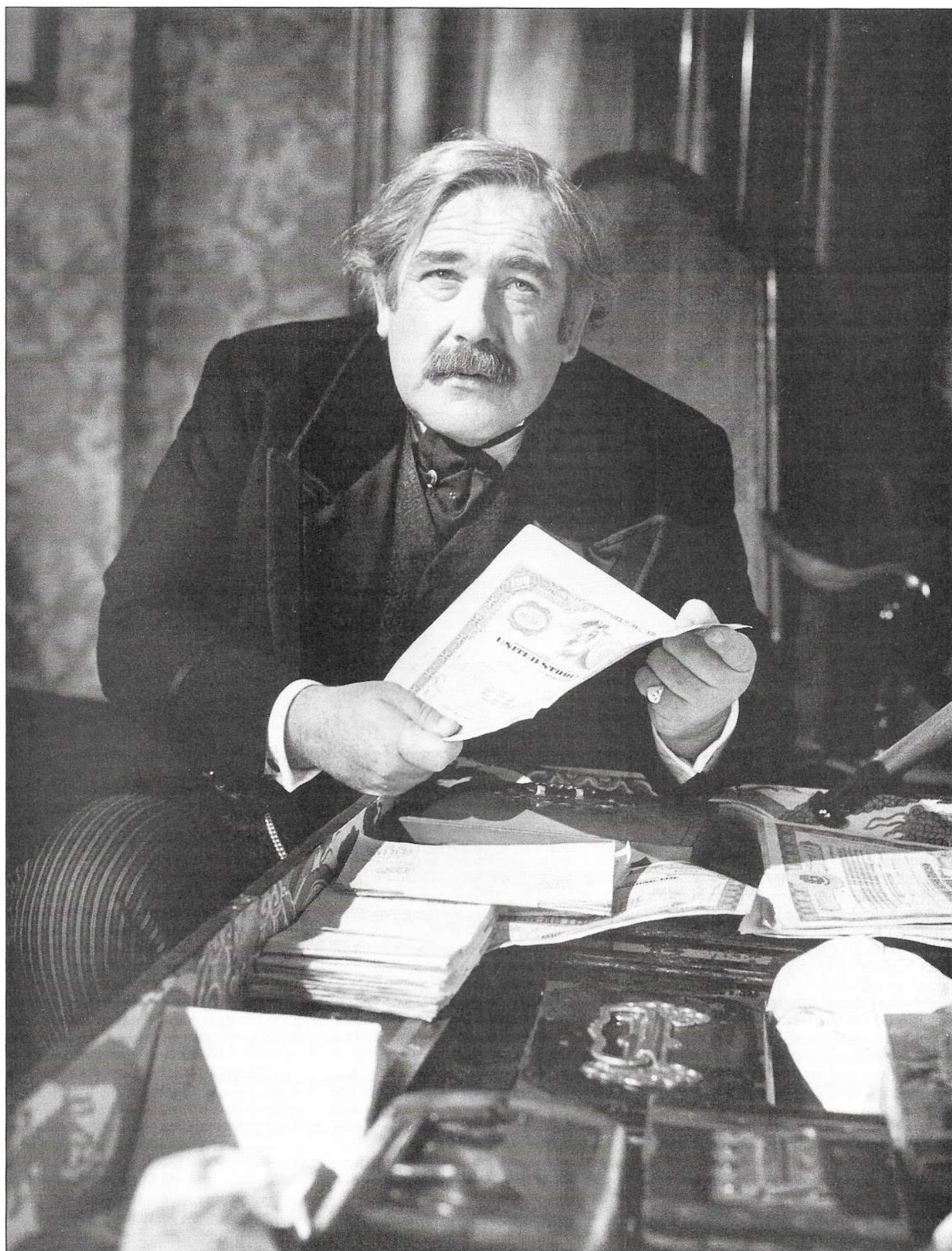
Memorable though the sequence may be, viewers will not find it in Granada's *THE RESIDENT PATIENT*—nor will readers of the August 1893 *Strand* discover it on the printed page, and for a very simple reason. Conan Doyle originally wrote it as part of "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," published in the January 1893 edition of the magazine. When the time came to collect his latest series of Sherlock Holmes adventures in book form, the author chose to exclude "The Cardboard Box," finding it in retrospect a little too sensational. (All those dismembered ears!) The General Gordon sequence was much too good to lose, though, so Conan Doyle simply crammed it into "The Resident Patient"—and then neglected to delete it from "The Cardboard Box" when that tale was finally collected, in 1917's *His Last Bow*. (The result of this literary transplant is to have Watson refer, in "The Resident Patient," to a rainy, close, 90-degree day—in October!)

Scripting *THE RESIDENT PATIENT*, Derek Marlowe chose to bypass the sequence in favor of one set in a Baker Street barber shop, the better perhaps to get the story out of the sitting room, but also to set up a joke concerning Mrs. Hudson's spring cleaning. Instead of Holmes revealing Watson's innermost thoughts, we have Watson practicing the same trick on Holmes—and coming up almost entirely short of the mark. (He is correct in that the Great Man has



**ABOVE:** Mr. Blessington and Dr. Trevelyan (Patrick Newell and Nicholas Clay) form a strange partnership: in return for setting him up as a practicing physician, Blessington retains three-quarters of Trevelyan's earnings. **NEXT PAGE:** What is the fear that keeps Blessington (Patrick Newell) cowering in his bed chamber?









*Blessington, who doesn't trust banks, keeps his fortune locked in a strong box. Sherlock Holmes is less interested in the man's wealth than he is in his secret. Pictured: Jeremy Brett as Holmes, Patrick Newell as Blessington, and David Burke as Dr. Watson.*

been banished from his rooms so that Mrs. Hudson may complete her work.)

Following the barber-shop scene, viewers are treated to one of the most beautifully-designed shots in the series. Strolling along Baker Street, Holmes and Watson find a carriage in front of 221B and deduce (via dialogue lifted directly from Conan Doyle) that a physician in need has arrived at their lodgings. The duo enter the building, while the camera, which has glided gracefully along the street with them, rises and approaches the shaded window of the sitting room. As the white window shade fills the frame, there is a subtle dissolve to the same shade in the foreground of the sitting-room set. Mrs. Hudson lifts the shade and steps away from the window. Completing what looks on screen to be a single, flawless tracking shot, the camera moves into the room as Holmes and Watson come up the stairs and greet their new client. It is a bit of photographic expertise reminiscent—and worthy—of

Hitchcock. (Kudos to lighting cameraman Ken Morgan, camera operator Laurence Jones, and director David Carson.)

Excepting the dream sequence, the barber-shop scene, Mrs. Hudson's brief moments of housecleaning, and a well-staged, brutal murder by hanging, *THE RESIDENT PATIENT* is fairly unexceptional, if skillfully executed. For the most part, Conan Doyle's original plot is adhered to—which is not always a plus in a story chosen by the Baker Street Irregulars, in 1944, as one of the 12 worst in the Canon. (Granada has been crying for some time that all the best tales have been filmed, and there is nowhere to go but pastiche—while ignoring the fact that *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Valley of Fear*, among other worthies, have been neglected—but the fact is, the company has already produced fully half of the disesteemed dozen—three in their first two seasons!)

The performances, for the most part, are first-rate, with Jeremy Brett as Sher-

lock Holmes, Rosalie Williams as Mrs. Hudson, and especially David Burke as Dr. John H. Watson capturing perfectly the beloved residents of 221B Baker Street. (Burke is particularly delightful at the barber shop, and again in the closing credits, during which he tries to come up with a title for the adventure just concluded.) Patrick Newell is a fine, fear-stricken Mr. Blessington, but Nicholas Clay is oddly stiff and unappealing as Dr. Trevelyan, possibly to lend credence to Watson's suspicion that his fellow physician might be behind the tale's devious doings.

*THE RESIDENT PATIENT* doesn't exactly tread water—it has too much to recommend it for that—but it is a relatively subdued prelude to the final two episodes of Granada's *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*, in which the world's first consulting detective at last meets his great nemesis: Professor James Moriarty!

—Richard Valley



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# I WAS A TEENAGE . . .

BY EARL LOGAN

Last summer, producer Samuel Z. Arkoff announced plans to remake *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* and asked that anyone interested in the title role show up for a massive casting call, preferably as a werewolf. The more savvy of the young Hollywood hopefuls knew that it was nothing but a publicity stunt—the last thing any producer really wants, if he is looking for a leading man, is to have him covered in fur—but then, a more savvy actor wouldn't show up for that kind of a cattle call anyway. Should Arkoff actually make the picture, it's doubtful that it will have the same impact that the original did in 1957. *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF* was the first picture to combine two popular genres: the juvenile-delinquent film and the horror film. It earned an unexpected \$2 million for its \$100,000 investment and kicked off a cycle of teenage fright flicks that lasted till 1961. It outraged parents and delighted their offspring, its title became the butt of countless gags, and it put the newly-formed American International Pictures on the map.

*TEENAGE WEREWOLF* was the brainchild of Herman Cohen, then 29 years old and the producer of *CRIME OF PASSION* (1957), which hadn't done any business. Cohen couldn't understand why until he discovered that the kids were the ones buying tickets, while parents stayed home to watch TV. The kids wanted to see movies about kids, so Cohen and his friend Aben Kandel concocted a script about a troubled youth named Tony Rivers, whose well-meaning, widowed father is too busy making ends meet to give his boy proper guidance. Tony finds himself engaged in a series of fights, which convinces an equally well-meaning cop that Tony needs psychiatric help. Unfortunately, the local shrink is quite mad. "Mankind is on the verge of destroying itself," the doctor tells his snivelling assistant. "The only hope for the human race is to hurl it back into its primitive dawn, to start all over again." Through hypnosis, the doc regresses Tony to a period of evolution in which the boy was a werewolf—something Darwin never told us about. Once Tony realizes what he's become and that he's responsible for a series of gruesome murders, he begs the doc for help. The psychiatrist regresses him again in order to photograph Tony in his primitive stage, which turns out to be a bad career move.

Tony kills the doc and his assistant before the same cop that sent him to the lunatic bursts into the office and shoots him dead.

Cohen took his script to James H. Nicholson and Samuel Z. Arkoff, who were running a little company called American International Pictures. AIP had been in business for four years, packaging double-feature programs aimed at the youth market. Cohen's project seemed like a natural.

Since Jim Nicholson's death in the early 1970s, Cohen and Arkoff have been fighting over *TEENAGE WEREWOLF*—as with any successful picture, everyone involved wants the lion's share of credit. Over the years, Arkoff has fallen into the habit of referring to every AIP picture as "his." In his more generous moments, he uses a collective "we," giving the impression that he was on the set at the time, making creative decisions, when in fact he handled the business end of the productions and was never present unless he had to "goose" some director who'd fallen behind schedule. Still, as often happens with business-minded people, once they've got the money, they want the glory, too. It was Cohen's film. His idea. His script. But the title, which was in no small way responsible for the film's success, is another matter entirely.

"To take first things first," wrote S. A. Desick in his review of the film in the *Los Angeles Examiner*, "the title is a magnificent piece of composition. It has a haunting quality about it, and I ought to caution you that if you let it pierce your consciousness it will echo in your brain in a constant refrain . . ."

In his book *Flying through Hollywood by the Seat of My Pants* (Carol, 1992)—more aptly titled, I feel, *Lying through Hollywood*—Arkoff credits the title to Nicholson. In an interview with one of the

local papers at the time, Nicholson said his daughter came up with it. Alex Gordon, one of AIP's most active producers during its formative years, remembered the title coming out of a bull session attended by himself, Nicholson, and Arkoff, in which the three tried to recall the longest film title. According to Gordon, *I WAS A PRISONER ON DEVIL'S ISLAND* (1941), and *I WAS A COMMUNIST FOR THE F.B.I.* (1951) gave birth to *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*. Gordon couldn't recall who actually came up with the title, but he assumed that it was







**Michael Landon (Pictured LEFT with costar Yvonne Lime and BELOW spitting up Mr. Softee) howled his way to semi-stardom in 1957's *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*.**

Fowler told Whit Bissell, who played the mad psychiatrist, to keep in mind that his character was not a "bad man." Bissell played his part well, as did most of the performers, but the single most important piece of casting was the choice of Michael Landon for the role of Tony.

There were two actors up for the part: Landon and Scott Marlowe. Marlowe appeared briefly in *THE BLACKBOARD JUNGLE* (1955), as the young hood who tries to rape Margaret Hayes in the school library. Although Marlowe had an intense quality that made him convincing in such later films as *THE COOL AND THE CRAZY* and *YOUNG AND WILD* (both 1958), he probably wouldn't have been as effective in *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* as Michael Landon proved to be. Landon's performance is top-drawer. Fowler, Arkoff, and Cohen are all convinced that it was his appearance in this film that landed Landon the part of Little Joe on TV's *BONANZA*, the role that made him a star. However, as there was a two-and-a-half-year lapse before he galloped onto the *Ponderosa*, it's likely that lycanthropy had nothing to do with his being cast in the show. Landon had, after all, acted in *GOD'S LITTLE ACRE* (1958), *HIGH SCHOOL CONFIDENTIAL!* (1958), and *THE LEGEND OF TOM DOOLEY* (1959), in the interim, so

who can say which film was responsible—or, for that matter, whether any of the films were responsible. Landon never expressed shame at having starred in the film and ultimately paid tribute to his werewolf roots by reprising the role on his *HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN* television series in the 80s.

As *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* was coming together, Herman

Nicholson. In a letter to the *Los Angeles Times*, Cohen conceded that *I WAS A* was Nicholson's, but claimed *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* as his. Yet, when the film was first announced in the trades, it was called *BLOOD OF THE WEREWOLF*, and later that same year Cohen made a film called *BLOOD OF DRACULA*. This hubbub over the title illustrates the confusion involved in trying to sort out who did what on any given film. There is no confusion, however, over who gets credit for the quality of the film, surprisingly good for a seven-day shoot: It goes to photographer Joseph LaShelle and director Gene Fowler, Jr. Without exception, every other teenage monster movie made by Cohen is lackluster and uninspired.

Fowler was a film editor, working in the building next to Cohen at Producer's Studios. When Cohen asked him if he'd like to direct a feature, Fowler seized the opportunity. Then he read the script. It was his wife, thinking no one would see the picture, who convinced him to do it so that he could get a director's credit. Fowler asked his friend LaShelle, who'd photographed *LAURA* (1944) and many other major motion pictures, to help him out. LaShelle wasn't crazy about the idea, but agreed to do it as a favor. According to Fowler, Cohen was too busy promoting other projects to spend much time on the set, giving Fowler ample opportunity to rewrite the script without the producer's knowledge.

"It was the usual kind of mad-scientist picture and I was unhappy with the idea," Fowler told interviewer Tom Weaver:

In the script, after the first interview with [Tony], a maniacal gleam comes into the scientist's eyes and he rubs his hands together! I always figured that a villain, in his own eyes, was a very good, very nice fellow. So I tried to make the villain just that—he was actually trying to do good for the world.







Remember all those corny old monster-mag jokes about Gary Conway's severe acne problem in *I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN* (1957), Sandra Harrison's unplucked beetle-brows in *BLOOD OF DRACULA* (1957), and those lovable Cabbage Patch Kids in *INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN* (1957)? Well, so do we . . .

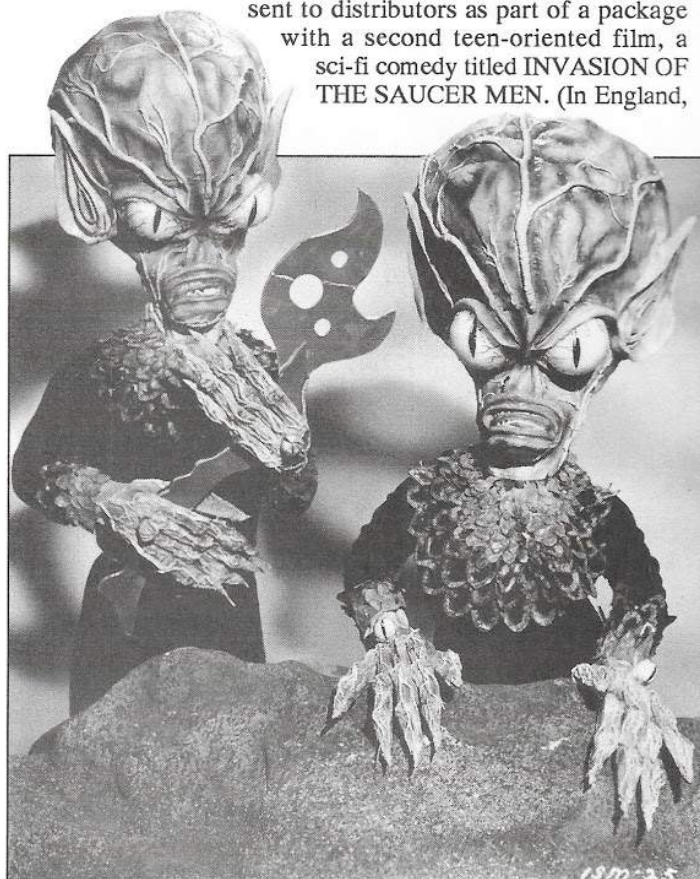
Cohen had second thoughts about putting his name on it, worried that it might kill his chances of moving into bigger films. (He and Aben Kandel had used a single pseudonym on the screenplay credit.) Then people from *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Life* began calling American International to ask about the picture, and Cohen happily stepped forward to claim credit.

Once *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* was ready for release, it was sent to distributors as part of a package with a second teen-oriented film, a sci-fi comedy titled *INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN*. (In England,

*TEENAGE WEREWOLF* was paired with *DRAGSTRIP GIRL*.) Just as *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* had combined horror with elements from *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE* (1955) and other J. D. dramas, so *THE SAUCER MEN* tapped the flying-saucer paranoia that had begun in 1947 when an airplane pilot named Kenneth Arnold reported disk-like objects in the vicinity of Mt. Rainier, Washington. Basing their script on the short story "The Cosmic Frame" by Paul Fairman, Al Martin and Robert Gurney (the latter also the film's producer) expanded Fairman's tale of visitors from space who frame the only witness to their arrival for murder. In Martin and Gurney's scenario, the aliens are killed by the glare of hot-rod headlights.

*SAUCER MEN* was directed, much to the film's detriment, by veteran Edward L. Cahn. Like Fowler, Cahn was a former film cutter, but unlike Fowler he was far more interested in breaking for lunch than he was in making a good film. Cahn was consistently one of the most listless, unimaginative directors in the low-budget arena, cranking out the sort of films that one might expect from the pod people of Santa Mira. That said, it will probably come as no surprise that *THE SAUCER MEN* is nowhere near as interesting a picture as *TEENAGE WEREWOLF*. Excepting the bug-eyed little green monsters created by AIP's resident monster-maker Paul Blaisdell, the most remarkable thing about the picture is that the cost of its poster has risen from \$150 to \$2,000 in recent years, something far more frightening than any scene in the movie itself. The one-sheet was designed by artist Albert Kallis, who created the advertising campaigns for all the AIP movies made in the 50s. A theatre owner once told Kallis, "If we could put sprocket holes on your ad campaigns, then we'd really have something."

In Stephen Rebello's *Cinefantastique* piece, "Selling Nightmares," Kallis recalled his approach to *I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF*. Because of the ludicrous title, he felt that the ad campaign had to have a better design. In contrast to his garish and busy *SAUCER MEN* art, the *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* artwork was simple: a grey background; a girl in leotards poised to scream on the left; a large, furry paw leaving red gashes in the grey as it rakes the image on the right. "It





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GARY CONWAY • JOHN ASHLEY  
Directed by HERBERT L. STROCK  
Screenplay by KENNETH LANGSTY & HERMAN COHEN  
Produced by HERMAN COHEN

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was a great exploitation title," remarked Kallis, "but it would have been less great if we'd tried to illustrate that title. The element of the bloody claw gave it a design look which piqued the interest and lifted the picture by not doing the obvious."

Box-office returns on WEREWOLF persuaded Cohen to abandon his plans to move into bigger productions. He and Aben Kandel, again writing under a single pseudonym, went to work on I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN. Annoyed by Fowler's WEREWOLF meddling, Cohen hired another former editor, Herbert Strock, to direct. Apparently, Strock delivered the goods as far as Cohen was concerned, because they reunited on two more films, both pretty dismal.

TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN set the pattern for Cohen's subsequent films. Once again, an adult is responsible for corrupting a teenager, but in TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN the focus shifts from the victim to the villain. Also, unlike the werewolf film, the tone of the picture is tongue-in-cheek. A

bouncer named Gary Conway was signed for the title role, and Whit Bissell was back as a mad doctor. Years later, looking back on the films, Bissell remarked, "They were pot-boilers, you know. Cooked-up things. They were fun pictures to make, but nobody ever pretended that they were great art. If you didn't flub a line it was a take."

The film was still in production when Nicholson and Arkoff made a deal with R. J. O'Donnell, owner of the largest chain of theatres in Texas, to play TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN and a second teen horror picture at O'Donnell's Majestic Theatre during Thanksgiving week, one of the biggest play dates of the year. O'Donnell was fed up with demands for higher percentages from the major studios and, by booking an AIP combo into a theatre normally reserved for studio blockbusters, he was giving the majors the bird. The deal was made over Labor Day, and Cohen was told to get busy on a second feature, to support his Frankenstein film. Cohen and Kandel simply revamped their WEREWOLF script, switched the lead characters' genders, put a vampire in place of a werewolf, and called the film BLOOD OF DRACULA. "One of the reviewers at the time called it the worst vampire movie ever made," recalled director Strock. "He was probably right."

Though the combination proved less successful than AIP's previous double bill, it did well enough to warrant another teen offering, HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER, released the following year. This time, Cohen and Kandel centered their story on a makeup man named Pete Dumond (Robert H. Harris), who has been given the boot by the new studio bosses at AIP. (They've decided to abandon horror films in favor of musicals.) Dumond hypnotizes two young teenaged actors (Gary Clarke and Gary Conway), disguises them in Werewolf and Frankenstein makeup, and sends them out to kill off the new regime. In the end, Dumond is burned alive when his private chamber of horrors catches fire. According to Strock, this sequence was given added urgency when a drunken effects man started the blaze before the cameras were set to roll. "We had two cameras for the sequence," said Strock, "so I grabbed the cameraman and shoved him behind one of the cameras and I hustled all of the actors onto the set; then I jumped behind the other camera and everybody hurried through their lines before everything burned to the ground." (Cohen has said that this never happened.)

The final minute of TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN had been filmed in color; for HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER, AIP splurged on an entire color reel. They then promoted the film (see the ad on this page) to give the impression that it was completely a color film, though it's doubtful that even 3-D and Cinerama would have gotten MONSTER on its feet. Reviews were surprisingly kind. The *Mirror News* found it "better than its jivey title might indicate;" *Variety* claimed that it had "some sharp dialog." The most shocking declaration came from the *Hollywood Citizen News*, which actually liked the film's only song, performed by John Ashley.

With no other "teens" in the house to bill as a support film, Nicholson and Arkoff retitled Roger Corman's PREHISTORIC WORLD and called it TEENAGE CAVEMAN, much to the dismay of Corman and his star, Robert Vaughn. Robert Campbell, who wrote the picture, ran into Vaughn at a Sunset Strip coffee house a short time later, and they commiserated about the name change. "That wasn't the most serious injury done me on that film," Campbell told writer W. C. Stroyby:

The whole thing was an allegory, as you know, about the destruction of the world by atomic power. And here is mankind trying to struggle out of it, building all





**LEFT:** *The Car-crash Case* and the *Hirsute High-schooler* returned in 1958's *HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER*. Robert H. Harris played a makeup wiz working for American International Pictures. (And Jack Pierce thought he had problems!) **RIGHT:** Steve McQueen made a good impression as *THE BLOB*'s James Dean clone in 1958. Love interest Aneta Corseaut attained immortality (of sorts) as Helen Crump on television's *THE ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW*.

the myths, the taboos, doing all the things that were supposed to preserve the remnants of the race long enough for it to survive. And when Vaughn's character goes stumbling off into the lush forest, when he goes daringly out there—which is also allegorical, that somebody sooner or later is going to turn their back on the teaching of the elders and find out that what was said was not true—he was supposed to come upon this spaceman in what I envisioned as a marvelous, elaborate spacesuit, you know, Victorian, sort of like the kind of stuff Disney did in 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA.

What he got instead was the left-over, rag-tag suit from *NIGHT OF THE BLOOD BEAST*, another Corman film. "I

can still remember the opening sentence in the first review, in the *Los Angeles Times*," Corman wrote in his book *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime* (Random House, 1990), before proceeding to misquote the review (though he captured its sentiment fairly accurately). The *Times* thought it was a pretty good little picture. "The next day Jim and Sam changed the title back to *PREHISTORIC WORLD*," Corman added, which simply isn't true.

By this time, other film companies were beginning to realize that Nicholson and Arkoff were onto something with their teenage terrors. Howco's Western melodrama *MONSTER ON THE HILL*, about a boy made ugly and crazy by the flash of a meteor, became *TEENAGE MONSTER* (1957). Universal-International's shocker about a college professor

*Hot-rodding teenagers ran into the GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW in 1959. The titular spirit turned out to be unsung monster-maker Paul Blaisdell in his patented, often-used She Creature costume. Waste not, want not . . .*







(Arthur Franz) who inadvertently turns himself into a prehistoric savage, shot under the title *STRANGER IN THE NIGHT*, became the youth-oriented *MONSTER ON THE CAMPUS* (1958). Teenagers crept into sci-fi and horror films otherwise dominated by a more traditional middle-aged cast. Precredit sequences for Republic's *BEGINNING OF THE END* and Allied Artists' *NOT OF THIS EARTH* (both 1957) featured teens as monster fodder. Likewise, a pack of fun-loving hot-rodders met a violent end midway through Columbia's *THE GIANT CLAW* (1957) and, in Allied Artists' *WAR OF THE SATELLITES* (1958), a pair of adolescent lovers discovered a capsule containing a message from outer space, warning Earth to cease its space-exploration program.

The first producer to really give AIP a run for its money was Jack H. Harris with his independently-made *THE BLOB* (1958), shot on a shoestring in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and sold to Paramount at a considerable profit. *THE BLOB* was similar to *INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN* in that it was primarily about teen heroes confronting a menace from beyond, but its plot also parallels *REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE*. *THE BLOB*'s star, Steve McQueen, affected many of James Dean's mannerisms and, like Dean in *REBEL*, sported a red jacket. His efforts to warn the town about a giant gelatinous mass that is eating everyone in sight are misconstrued by the film's authority figures, who believe McQueen to be nothing more than a trouble-making hoodlum with a penchant for drag racing. In the end, of course, he is vindicated and, with a little help from his buddies, saves the day.

Though not as professional-looking as AIP's product, *THE BLOB* was better-tailored to its target audience than anything AIP had offered since *TEENAGE WEREWOLF*. The focus of the story is on the teenagers, whose motivations are reasonable, and the film's location photography gives it a more realistic look than the studio-bound pictures of AIP. Not a classic by any stretch of the imagination, *THE BLOB* survives on TV, video, and laserdisc, if for no other reason than as a curiosity piece. It is, after all, Steve McQueen's first starring role. It has a bouncy title song by Burt Bacharach. It's in color. And it may be the first film to end with a question mark, a trick used by its producer for years to come. The film

is rather like an eccentric old friend who comes to dinner with stains on his shirt.

Despite the success of *THE BLOB*, the major studios seemed determined to maintain the status quo, continuing to make fantasy films with predominately adult characters. It was up to the minors to cater to the teens, and AIP was in the forefront. In *EARTH VS. THE SPIDER* (1958), writers Laszlo Gorog and George Yates divided the heroic chores between a high-school teacher (played by Ed Kemmer) and his student (Gene Persson). The finale is a graphic illustration of the need for intergenerational team work, with the giant spider trapped between two electrodes, one held by Kemmer, the other by Persson. The juice is turned on; the spider is knocked senseless by a jolt of electricity and plunges to its death, impaled on stalagmites. *THE GIANT GILA MONSTER* (1959) is killed by a speeding hot rod loaded with nitroglycerine, sacrificed by its teenaged owner (played by Don Sullivan). In *GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW* (1959), a group of hot-rod fanatics

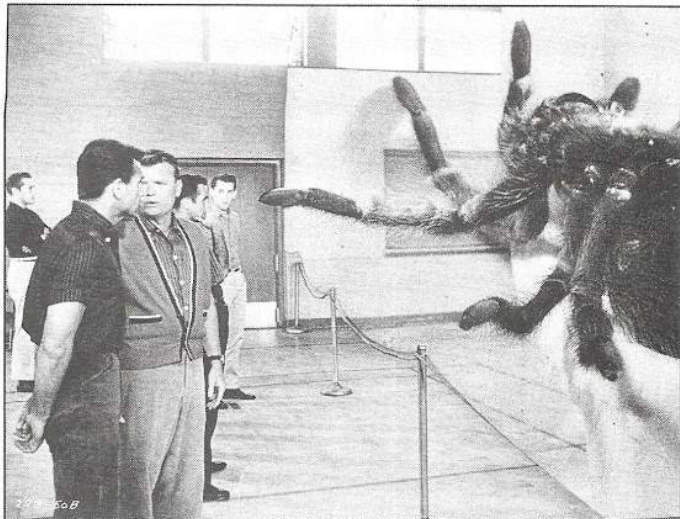
solve the mystery of a haunted house and its fraudulent ghost, which turns out to be AIP's own Paul Blaisdell, dressed in one of his monster costumes. In what is supposed to be a comic moment, Blaisdell (playing himself) whines about being left out of an upcoming AIP film. As this was Blaisdell's final film for the company, and considering that, soon after, he fell into obscurity, it's probably the most frightening scene in the entire picture.

As 1959 drew to a close, the teenage-horror cycle pretty much ran its course. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, AIP began filming bigger-budgeted Edgar Allan Poe adaptations and sword-and-sandal epics, sans teenagers. Less ambitious filmmakers moved in to pick up the scraps.

First in line was Astor Pictures' *FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER*, shot in six days for \$65,000. Producer Marc Frederic's home was used for the exteriors, with the bulk of

*Continued on page 99*

*Rock 'n' roll brought THE SPIDER (1958) back to life when a band rehearsed in the gym in which "Mr. Eight Legs" was on display. That's Skip Young, Wally of THE ADVENTURES OF OZZIE AND HARRIET, in the sweater.*





# *The Singing Detective* A Review of *Sherlock Holmes: The Musical* by David Stuart Davies

The concept of a musical show featuring Sherlock Holmes is not new. In 1953, Richard Arnell composed a ballet called *THE GREAT DETECTIVE*. Kenneth Macmillan, dressed in the most garish of Inverness capes, danced through a series of musical scenes: "Police and the Doctor," "Distressed Lady and Suspect," "Doctor and Ladies," "The Fiend," and "Dance of Deduction." Though not named directly, the fiend was none other than Professor Moriarty, Napoleon of Crime and failed swimmer. Also, somewhere along the way, the ballet featured "a dangerous gorilla"—as though the choreographer had wandered from Baker Street to the Rue Morgue.

A particularly intriguing aspect of the production was that, in the closing moments of the show, Macmillan appeared as both Holmes and Moriarty. The *Times* commented: "We cannot allow posterity to infer that our beloved Mr. Holmes and the vile Moriarty are one and the same person." Apparently, the concept of a dancing, prancing Holmes did not worry them. (Of course, the notion that Holmes and Moriarty were the same person was later to be explored theatrically by Jeremy Paul in his successful stage play *THE SECRET OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*, which starred Granada's Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke.)

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In the mid-60s there appeared on Broadway *BAKER STREET*, "a big rousing musical success," as *Variety* described it. The music and lyrics were by Marian Grudeff and Raymond Jessel, the book by Jerome Coopersmith. The songs were witty and tuneful, one of the best being Holmes' solo, "Cold Clear



*Robert Powell as Sherlock Holmes*

World," which expresses the following sentiments:

I have waited in vain  
 for someone to explain  
 what love can conceivably offer  
 the cerebral type of man  
 but no one ever has  
 and no one ever will  
 for no one ever can.

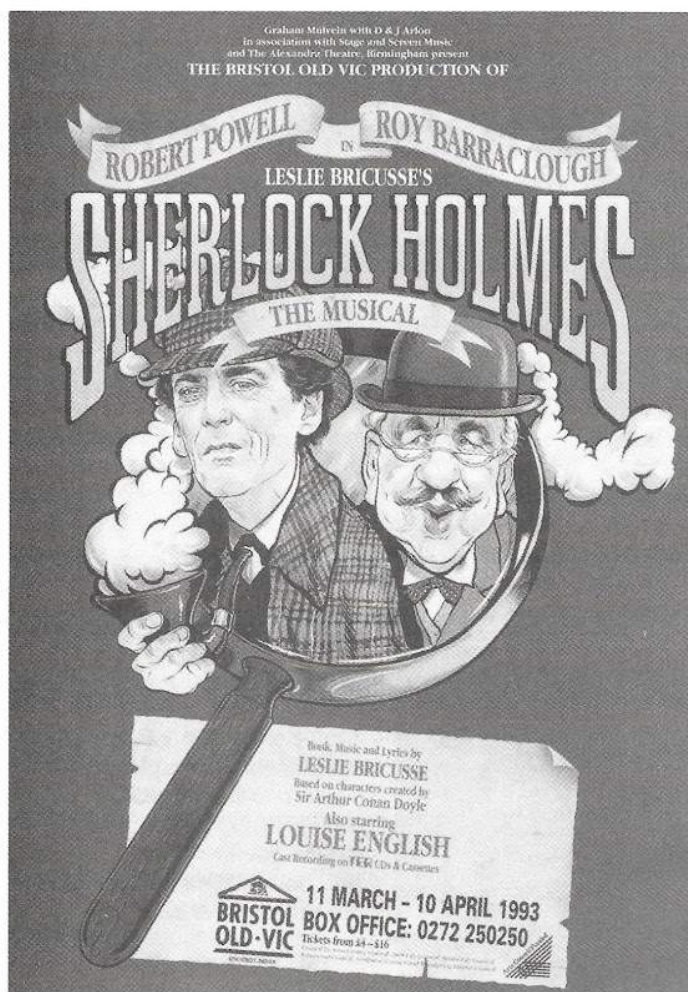
Holmes was played by Fritz Weaver and Watson by British actor Peter Sallis. Sallis is now very familiar in Britain for his TV roles, particularly in the long-running *LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE*, but in the mid-60s he was very much a supporting player. He says that when he was asked to play on Broadway, he believes the producers thought they were signing Peter Sellers! Irene Adler was played by Inga Swenson, who became well-known for her portrayal of Kraus on television's *BENSON*.

The plot of *BAKER STREET* had elements from "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Empty House," but also included Moriarty's plot to steal the Diamond Jubilee gifts presented to Queen Victoria. At one point Moriarty,

I shall miss you, Holmes  
 for in truth we are fellow connoisseurs.  
 It grieves me, Holmes  
 to eclipse such an intellect as yours.

With the help of the Baker Street Irregulars, Holmes escapes and later confronts his enemy on the white cliffs of Do-





ver, where, after a desperate struggle, both men fall over the edge. Miraculously, Holmes survives for the rousing finale.

\* \* \*

In the mid-70s, I met Ron Moody, well-remembered for his definitive performance of Fagin in *OLIVER!* (Definitive in this musical; my vote still goes to Alec Guinness in the 1948 David Lean movie.) At the time, Moody expressed a wish to play Holmes in *BAKER STREET* should it ever be produced in Britain. Well, in a sense his wish was granted in 1989, when he starred in the Leslie Bricusse show *SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MUSICAL*. Initially, the production had a successful out-of-town run at the Northcote Theatre in Exeter (Hound of the Baskervilles territory), before coming to London in the spring. It had only a modest run. I saw the show and was disappointed. Apart from anything else, Moody seemed wrong in the part. He played a music-hall version of the Great Detective. I have been told that, near the end of the run, he began sending up the part and making unannounced entrances during scenes in which he was not supposed to appear.

A story is told which throws an amusing light on the show's conception. Apparently, Bricusse had been toying with the idea of a Holmes musical for years, and in the very early stages—in the 70s, according to my source—the composer played his score for Dame Jean Conan Doyle at Barbara Cartland's house. It is said that Dame Jean, like that other gracious lady, Queen Victoria, was not amused.

When the Moody version closed, I thought we had seen the last professional production of *SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MUSICAL*. How wrong can you be? Like Holmes himself, the

show has made a sudden return to full houses rather than that empty one.

'Olmes is 'ome again!  
E's come back from the dead!  
'E didn't die in Reichenbach  
Like everybody said!

The current production, on tour around Britain until October, is a sharper and a more potent show than its previous incarnation. This is mainly due to Robert Powell's performance as Holmes. Unlike Moody, Powell plays him seriously—so much so that one wishes that this were a straight play.

I interviewed Powell shortly before opening night, and it was quite clear that the special buzz he was feeling came from appearing in a musical, rather than from playing the foremost champion of law and order of Victorian England. However, Powell's views on portraying Holmes are healthy and sensible. He certainly saw no reason to research the character: "Like most people, I've lived with Holmes all my life. He's imbued in all of us. He's an inescapable character. I find it odd when people ask me if I'm worried because so many people have played him so many times. It's just the opposite. I'm happy to give my version. It's like *HAMLET*; it never for an instance crosses an actor's mind that, because someone else has played him, you can't. If it did, it would wipe out the whole canon of classical drama. This particular Holmes is my version."

And a pleasing version it is, too. Powell was actually the actor that Leslie Bricusse had in mind when he wrote the musical. "The plan was to do it at the Chichester Festival and then bring it into London. However, at that time I was contracted to Thames Television to do the *HANNAY* series and I couldn't guarantee to be able to go with the show after Chichester, so the idea was dropped. Later, it was produced with Ron Moody, but I told Leslie that I would like to do it sometime. Even when I first read the script, I thought it was wonderful—but now, with the changes that have been made, the book is at least 50 per-cent better. It is, I'm convinced, an absolutely extraordinarily clever, witty plot, which is the perfect way of introducing a woman into the Sherlock Holmes stories."

It is surprising that Powell, who has a penchant for playing heroes (not to mention Jesus Christ) has played Holmes only once before: in a BBC radio production of *A Study in Scarlet* in the 70s. "It is a part that has floated past me several times in my career," Powell told me, "but this is the first time I've been really keen to play him—or rather to sing him."

Powell was asked if the role was conceived in the same manner as Rex Harrison's Professor Henry Higgins in *MY FAIR LADY*, allowing the actor to "talk" his songs. (Shaw's Higgins was inspired in part by Holmes.) "I think it was possibly conceived as such, and when we originally discussed it I was told I didn't have to sing it, I could speak it. Oddly enough, I find I want to sing it. I'm happier singing it!"

If the show is a success (and certainly reports so far suggest that it is pleasing audiences in the British provinces), there is a strong possibility of taking it across America on tour in 1994. "I'm sure it would do well. You see, the very title of this show tells the audience exactly what they are going to get."

A word about Roy Barraclough, who plays Watson: Barraclough is best known to British audiences as the waspish landlord of *The Rovers Return* in the popular television soap *CORONATION STREET*. Though Barraclough has sung in pantomimes in the past, he has never considered himself a singer, so was surprised when he was asked to take on the role of the warbling Watson. "Leslie Bricusse was keen for me to



take the part, so I went down to London to sing for him, fully expecting that when he heard me he'd rip up the contract. But after a couple of numbers, he was convinced more than ever that I was the man to play Watson."

One of the essentials of the Holmes and Watson partnership is that, whatever dangers and disturbances they encounter, we must believe that not only are they able to get on well together, but in fact really like each other. Barraclough saw this as no problem: "Robert and I are friends in real life. We go back over 20 years, when we were in rep together at Stoke on Trent in the 60s." (Rep is the equivalent of American stock theatre.)

I attended the opening of **SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MUSICAL** in Bristol. There is no overture. The curtain rises and we are presented with a spectacular reenactment of the famous death struggle between Professor Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes on the ledge above the Reichenbach Falls. The silhouetted figures embrace in enmity and fall into the seething foam below.

A blast of music. Darkness. And then a station scene in which Watson, emerging to gentle applause through clouds of steam, reads of his friend's death. The station porter commiserates (with a familiar voice) and then, of course, reveals himself to be Sherlock Holmes!

The plot of the show is Bricusse's own. He borrows little bits from various stories in the Canon, but essentially this is new territory. In my opinion, it ain't half bad! The main thrust of the drama concerns a revenge intrigue whereby Professor Moriarty seems to be reaching out from beyond his watery grave to implicate Sherlock Holmes in murder.

Holmes encounters a beautiful mystery lady, Bella, who appears to be a damsel in distress, but in reality (did I say reality?) is Moriarty's daughter out for revenge. In the way that musicals have of sentimentalizing situations, Bella and Holmes become smitten with each other. (Well, William Gillette realized this most un-Doylean of concepts first, and no doubt the spirit of Alice Faulkner was hovering over Bella Moriarty as she nestled her head on Sherlock's chest.)

The script reveals that Bricusse knows his Holmes. There are some ingenious Sherlockian in-jokes planted along the way, and the usual props—the violin, the deerstalker, the Persian slipper, and the magnifying glass—are all here, too.

Further fidelity to the original is added by Robert Powell.

This is the genuine Sherlock, or at least a very close relative, placed within a new and rather gaudy setting. Powell has a stylish way of tossing off the several smart one-liners that he's been given. When Watson is astounded by his resurrection from Reichenbach, Holmes observes, pithily, "There are biblical precedences." Later, when Lestrade announces that he is puzzled, the Great Detective remarks, "Wouldn't it be simpler to tell me what doesn't puzzle you, Lestrade?"

Powell is acceptable in the singing department, but appropriately for the ultimate reasoner, Sherlock's songs are mainly talk-songs, for which sustained singing is not required.

Roy Barraclough is splendid, too, as Watson—a Watson ripe for the show ground, all bright waistcoats and a bristling moustache. He has taken on the mantle of Nigel Bruce, but added a dash of style.

Special mention must be made of James Head as Lestrade. Again we are in the realm of caricature, but it is a skillful and highly comic portrayal of the short-sighted, thick-headed, pompous Scotland Yard. Interestingly, Head appeared in TV's **THE MASKS OF**



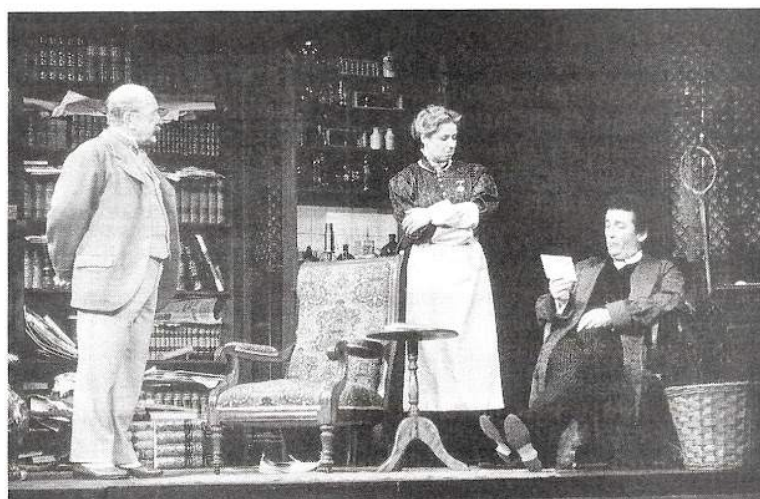
*Inga Swenson was Irene Adler and Fritz Weaver was Sherlock Holmes in the stunning 1965 production **BAKER STREET**, a show that richly deserves a revival.*

**DEATH** in 1984, opposite Peter Cushing as Holmes. The actor referred to that as the "cursed production." "Do you realize," he asked, "that within a short time after filming was completed four of the stars were dead: Gordon Jackson, Ray Milland, Anne Baxter, and Anton Diffring? I'm glad to be still breathing!"

As the femme fatale, Louise English sings sweetly, but lacks the power and presence of Liz Robertson, who played the part in the West End. Liz, who was Alan Jay Lerner's last wife, oozed sexuality, whereas Louise English is just a pretty young thing with a nice voice.

Many major literary characters have been given the musical treatment, among them Don Quixote (**THE MAN OF LA MANCHA**), Oliver Twist (**OLIVER!**), Scrooge (**A CHRISTMAS CAROL**), Professor Higgins (**MY FAIR LADY**), and Othello (**CATCH MY SOUL**), so Sherlock Holmes seems an ideal subject. However, the problem with Bricusse's treatment is that the music is terribly dated. It is stuck in the 60s, running some way behind **MY FAIR LADY** and **CAMELOT**. Listening to the songs, one would never think there has been

*Dr. Watson and Mrs. Hudson wait patiently while the Great Detective examines a clue in **SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MUSICAL**. Pictured: Roy Barraclough, Sarah Hay, and Robert Powell.*







*No stranger to mystery, Robert Powell has played Richard Hannay in both 1978's THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS and a British series shown on WLIW Channel 21 Public Television.*

SWEENEY TODD, MISS SAIGON, LES MISERABLES, and other shows of their ilk. It is interesting to note that three of Bricusse's songs were actually written in the late 60s. For instance, the "London is London" number—all grinning, grimy, cockneys prancing about on a set that might have been conceived in Hollywood in 1939—was first used in the musical film version of GOODBYE MR. CHIPS in 1969. No song is awful, many are very pleasant, but all are standing on the quay, having missed the boat.

Mrs. Hudson (Sarah Hay) has perhaps the best song in the show, bewailing her sorry lot as she informs us that she's had "A Lousy Life." It's a rip-snorter of a number, earning the longest applause of the evening, but I can't help thinking that it's a highly unsuitable song for the landlady of Baker Street. However, we are in Musical-Comedy-Land, where broadening, simplifying, and even coarsening the original source material are the accepted features. Or are they? One wonders what kind of darkly delicious concoction a Sherlock Holmes musical might turn out to be if it were scored by someone like Stephen Sondheim. (Sondheim did provide the song "I Never Do Anything Twice" for the 1976 film THE SEVEN PERCENT SOLUTION.) Perhaps one day . . .

Despite its weaknesses, SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MUSICAL is quite an achievement for Leslie Bricusse, for he is responsible for the lot: book, music, and lyrics. This is no mean feat, and though MY FAIR LADY it ain't (let's face it, shows of that calibre of musicality and literacy come along only once in a generation), the show provides a pleasant and entertaining night out in the theatre—and this version has the bonus of two stars who add a sparkle to the production. A CD cast album (That's Entertainment Records) was recorded in late April and is well worth a listen.

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# VOICES OF DOOM

## BY BENNET POMERANTZ

It seems like summer has arrived!

When most good people start to clean their homes in the spring for the new season, I'm toiling strenuously on new enterprises. So when the summer season rolls around, I tend to examine my back-list titles of mystery and horror for review. There are hidden treasures and trashy junk still on your favorite bookstore shelves, so here, instead of the newest of the newest product, is a sort of unconventional mix, a witches' brew . . .

It's a banner year for Dean R. Koontz, with two companies releasing two of his works on audiotape. From Reader's Chair, *THE BAD PLACE* pairs Michael Hanson and Carol Cowan, who are also on other Reader's Chair Koontz audios: Hanson and Cowan's narration skills are so well-suited to this material, they

make it happen right in front of your ears. The Reader's Chair Koontz audios make the Simon and Schuster audio, *DRAGON TEARS* (Koontz's newest novel), fade by comparison. *DRAGON TEARS* is read by Jay O. Sanders, who tries without success to get a handle on the Koontz technique. Sanders stumbles through this 13-hour audiobook; however, it's worth a listen if nothing else is available.

When an actor brings a certain flair to a role, whether it be stage, screen, television, or audiobooks, it is amazing to see the magic of the performance happen—or, in the case of audiobooks, hear it happen. Darren McGavin brings that certain something to the audio versions of John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee books. You'd have a hard time placing a finger on what makes McGavin's style so special in this series. On one of the latest releases, *FREE FALL IN CRIMSON* (Random House), gruff-voiced McGavin involves the listener in McGee's search for a millionaire's murderer. You'd think, after 19 productions of the Travis McGee novels, that McGavin's style would be bland and lifeless, but this is hardly the case. His vocal talents are like fine wine, always with great character, full-bodied, and aged to perfection.

Seeing the red hand clutching a dripping butcher's knife before an ebony background on the cover of Robert Bloch's *PSYCHO II* (Sunset Production), you get an eerie feeling that you're in for the audio ride for your life. You're right, too! Whereas most actors would try to steal the vocal style of the late Anthony Perkins, Mike Steele's kinetic narration makes this horror sequel—well—horrifying. This three-hour adaptation is a satisfying game of hide-and-go-shriek!

Have you ever wanted to commit the perfect murder? It seems such a nonsensical question, since at some point in our lives, we have all wanted to commit the heinous act. Luckily,

for most of us, our conscience grabs hold and reality sets in. Not so for Jack Hitt. He wants to succeed in the act of murder. Before committing the crime, Hitt consults five of the foremost mystery writers in the field for good advice. *THE PERFECT MURDER* by Jack Hitt with Lawrence Block, Sarah Caudwell, Tony Hillerman, Peter Lovesey, and Donald E. Westlake (Durkin Hayes), is a witty assault on the overrated crime of murder. With the audio aid of Lynn Redgrave (as Sarah Caudwell), Josef Sommer (as Donald E. Westlake), and Victor Garber (as Jack Hitt), this is a pure joy for mystery and mayhem fans everywhere.

As a critic, I have not always seen ear-to-ear with the audio versions of Stephen King's novels and stories. The problem

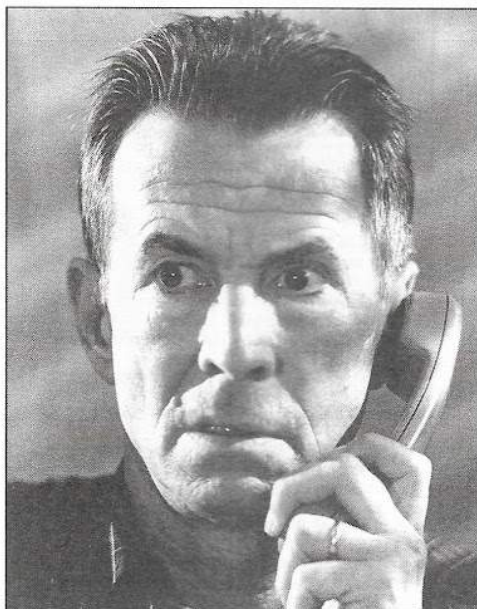
I have with the King tapes is the narration by King himself. When the author recites his unabridged works, as he does on his 24-hour *NEEDFUL THINGS* (Penguin Highbridge Audio), he tends to speak slowly and with no vocal interaction with the text. As good a terror dramatist as King is, he is not a suitable narrator for his own labors. With this in mind, I don't know who to thank—King or Penguin Highbridge—for the last two King audiobooks: *GERALD'S GAME* and *DOLORES CLAIBORNE*. Both involve female leads and are narrated by two of the best women in audiobooks today: *GERALD* by Lindsay Crouse and *DOLORES* by Frances Sternhagen (the latter having appeared in King's *GOLDEN YEARS* on TV). These actresses know how to relay these unabridged works in their own special styles.

1940's *FAREWELL, MY LOVELY* was Raymond Chandler's second Philip

Marlowe novel. However, it set the trend of the genre for the 1940s hard-boiled detective character, which has been utilized by such modern-day mystery writers as Sue Grafton, Ed Gorman, Max Allan Collins, and Lawrence Sanders. Elliot Gould, who played Marlowe on film in *THE LONG GOODBYE* (1973), narrates an unabridged *FAREWELL* from Dove Audio. This seven-and-a-half-hour reading is an event. Gould sounds just like the dark knight of the City of Angels. His off-key, monotone delivery makes you feel as though Marlowe has hopped off the page and onto the headset. For under \$30, it's a sure bet.

Two from master storyteller Rod Serling: Harper Audio has released four volumes of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* tales, with stars (including Roddy McDowell and Fritz Weaver) from the original television *ZONE*, and Pharaoh Audio Production has released two volumes of *NIGHT GALLERY*.

Well, that's a wrap. All of these audiobooks are available in fine bookstores and public libraries. Until next time, this is Bennet Pomerantz for *VOICES OF DOOM*. Happy Nightmares!



*Anthony Perkins as Norman Bates*

*Bennett Pomerantz is a regular contributor to Mystery Scene and Strange New Worlds.*







## WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?

AN APPRECIATION BY RICHARD VALLEY

*It is hard to laugh at the need for beauty and romance, no matter how tasteless, even horrible, the results of that are. But it is easy to sigh. Few things are sadder than the truly monstrous.*

—Nathanael West, *The Day of the Locust*

The film evokes its period from the very first frame—ostensibly not the first frame of *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, a motion picture released by United Artists in 1971, but that of a grainy, Hearst Metrotone News short subject of the 1930s. A title card flashes on the screen (Roosevelt Calls On All To Help Nation's Needy) and is followed by several brief glimpses of F.D.R. giving a speech on the White House lawn. A second title card (Mrs. Roosevelt Starts Aerial Cruise Of Caribbean Isles) takes us to Miami, where we watch as Eleanor boards a plane and a cheery narrator informs us that this is "the first over-ocean flight ever made by a president's wife. Off to Haiti!"

A third title card appears (Hill-Bruckner Murder Trial Ends In Braddock, Iowa) and the optimistic "We have nothing to fear but fear itself" tone of the Great Depression quickly dissipates. Reporters and angry townspeople mill

about a building as the narrator, sounding far less cheery, fills us in on some grim details:

Emotion continued high in this small country courthouse as young Leonard Hill and Wesley Bruckner, after six weeks of one of the century's grisliest murder trials, were sentenced to life imprisonment. During the course of the trial, the jury was shown photographs depicting the brutal mutilation killing of Ellie Banner, one of Braddock's most respected citizens.

Like the jury, we, the audience, weigh the evidence of the photographs. Ellie Banner, a woman in a polka-dot dress, is certainly dead, but the nature and extent of her mutilation is unclear, and the narrative claim for her social status does little to give her corpse the appearance of having once housed the spirit of small-town respectability. (Yellow journalism was not confined to Hearst newsprint; in his newsreels as well, a murder victim was often shoved up the social ladder in the belief that, somehow, "respectability" made the crime more heinous.)





"Come down an' see me sometime," says a pint-sized Mae West (Robbi Morgan) as mother (Helene Winston) hovers.

There was a tense moment, as crowds displeased at the verdict threatened the orderly departure of the young killers from the courthouse. Leaving moments later are the convicted mens' mothers, Adelle Bruckner and Helen Hill. During the sensation-packed days of the trial, Mrs. Bruckner and Mrs. Hill have been subjected to nearly as much public curiosity as their sons.

In our roles as popcorn-munching members of a long-gone audience, we watch two young men in caps, surrounded by police, step out of the courthouse and into a paddy wagon. (It is our only sight of the killers in either the newsreel footage or the film containing it.) Next, Adelle Bruckner and Helen Hill, surrounded by lawyers and reporters, leave the courthouse—and we are no longer moviegoers patiently waiting for the feature film to begin; we are modern-day viewers of a film called *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, because the two women are clearly Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters, *HELEN*'s stars. Adelle and Helen (and Debbie and Shelley) make their way hastily through the crowd and climb into the back seat of a vintage car. The narrator gets in a last, double-edged comment ("And so the ordeal comes to an end for these two women as their sons go to prison for life") and the action freezes. Bright pink credits appear over the black-and-white freeze frame, which, in the manner of a picture puzzle, fills in color one jigsaw piece at a time. The credits and puzzle completed, we leave the dark hyperbole of Hearst for the bloody "reality" of the horror film. The action—and the car—glides into motion, and Curtis Harrington's *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* be-

gins its journey from the small-town scandals of Braddock, Iowa, to the splashy delusions of Hollywood, California.

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*WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* belongs to that singular genre of screen horror literature that is almost as formal and unvarying as that of Eric Rohmer's *Six Moral Tales*: Two women, beyond or just at middle age, abandoned by the men in their lives, find themselves isolated from the normally neurotic world and locked into a relationship of psychotic dependency.

—Vincent Canby, *The New York Times*

Henry Farrell started it all with the 1960 publication of his novel *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* "A Shocker," said *The New York Times Book Review*. "A skin-prickler this, with monstrous malevolence," claimed *Kirkus*. Adapted by Lukas Heller for Robert Aldrich's 1962 film version, Farrell's story caused a sensation at the time, not the least because it marked the single screen teaming of those legendary stars (and rivals) Joan Crawford and Bette Davis. In sequences seemingly designed to bring joy to the heart of Christina Crawford, Davis (as Baby Jane Hudson) fed Crawford (as sister Blanche) dead rats and canaries, trussed her up in her bed, and belted her like a volleyball around their dark Hollywood home. (It wasn't all bad; at film's end, Davis did offer the dying Crawford some ice cream.)

Retiring to their corners after the knockout box office of *BABY JANE*, the Dynamic Divas were scheduled for a rematch in *HUSH . . . HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE* (1965), but mere days into production Crawford went down for the count. Replaced by Olivia De Havilland, the bitter star had to content herself with a few merry axe murders in William Castle's *STRAIT-JACKET* (1964). Farrell shared scripting honors with Heller on the Aldrich-directed *CHARLOTTE*, which boasted a *Who Was* cast of supporting players, including Joseph Cotten, Agnes Moorehead, Cecil Kellaway, and, in her last screen appearance, Mary Astor. Patti Page recorded the hit title tune.

Aldrich handed the directorial reins of *WHATEVER HAPPENED TO AUNT ALICE?* (1969) to Lee H. Katzin, but served as producer for the Geraldine Page/Ruth Gordon suspenser. Scripted by Theodore Apstein, *ALICE* nevertheless followed the Farrell thriller formula to a T, disposing of the feisty Gordon before handing the maniacal Page her climactic comeuppance.

Henry Farrell had begun his career as a pulp-magazine contributor, paid by the word. "I overwrote a great deal," he admitted in a 1970 interview, "but I learned from it."

Turning to mysteries, the writer at first haunted local police departments for ideas, but eventually decided that modern crimes were so genuinely horrible that he could rarely make use of them. Instead, Farrell developed his own often-sadistic method of generating suspense:

What works best for me is to write stories dealing with human emotions. I exaggerate them beyond our everyday emotional problems. People are frightened when they see things that could conceivably be happening to them. A good mystery can work if it has three good surprises or one great. That's what made the Hitchcock pictures so good. The audience was always being surprised by events.

*Continued on page 54*



# HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD!

Surely the one thing that Hollywood loves more than making money making movies, is making money making movies about movies—or, if not about movies, at least about the town in which movies are made. One story alone has given birth to four cinema sprouts: 1932's *WHAT PRICE HOLLYWOOD?* (with Lowell Sherman as a has-been director who helps waitress Constance Bennett achieve stardom) inspired 1937's *A STAR IS BORN* (featuring Janet Gaynor and Fredric March), which in turn inspired the superior 1954 musical with Judy Garland and James Mason and the drearier 1976 dud with Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson (dubbed *A STAR IS STILLBORN* by the wicked).

The films found on even a cursory list of Hollywood-based stories are remarkably varied in genre and approach. They include musicals (1950's *THREE LITTLE WORDS* and the "All Talking! All Dancing! All Singing!" classic many peg as Hollywood's greatest musical, 1952's *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN*), comedies (1945's *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO IN HOLLYWOOD* and 1961's *THE ERRAND BOY*), black comedies (1964's *GOOD-BYE CHARLIE* and 1965's *THE LOVED ONE*, the latter Evelyn Waugh's deadly dissection of Forest Lawn), films noir (1950's *IN A LONELY PLACE*), dramas (1950's top-of-the-heap *SUNSET BOULEVARD* and 1952's *THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL*), and Westerns (1951's *CALLAWAY WENT THAT-AWAY* and 1975's *HEARTS OF THE WEST*).

Sex rears its celluloid head in such disparate romps as 1964's *THE CARPETBAGGERS* (with Carroll Baker warming up her Jean Harlow impersonation), 1970's *MYRA BRECKINRIDGE* (with writer turned actor Rex Reed masturbating in Cinemascope and Raquel Welch strapping on a dildo to sodomize Roger Herren), and 1970's *BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS* (with Erica Gavin performing fellatio—briefly—on a gun and Michael Blodgett losing his head to a "super woman" named Z-Man).

The sound of Hollywood patting itself on the back while slapping whitewash on the truth can be heard in such reverential biopics as *THE JOLSON STORY* (1946, with

Larry Parks as an agreeable, self-effacing Al Jolson), *VALENTINO* (1951, with Anthony Dexter as a heterosexual Son of the Sheik), and *MAN OF A THOUSAND FACES* (1957, with James Cagney as a considerate Lon Chaney and Roger Smith a sober Chaney, Jr.). *HARLOW* and *HARLOW* (with Carroll Baker and Carol Lynley lost in a sea of peroxide for two competing 1965 debacles), *GABLE AND LOMBARD* (1976, with Jill Clayburgh as a foul-mouthed Lombard and James Brolin as Dumbo), and *W. C. FIELDS AND ME* (1976, with Rod Steiger chewing everything but his putty nose)

are further evidence of scripters playing fast and loose with the facts. There was even a second go at *VALENTINO* in 1976, this time with Ken Russell directing gay ballet legend Rudolf Nureyev as the still-heterosexualized title character.

Killers and those who catch them haven't been strangers to the Hollywood Hills, starting with Warner Oland, not yet immortalized as Charlie Chan, in *THE STUDIO MURDER MYSTERY* (1929) and embracing such later mystery vets as Chester Morris in *BOSTON BLACKIE GOES HOLLYWOOD* (1942) and Tom Conway in *THE FALCON IN HOLLYWOOD* (1944). *MARLOWE* (1969), based on Raymond Chandler's *The Little Sister* (1949), starred James Garner in a Hollywood whodunnit featuring Bruce Lee as a strong-arm man. (Strong-foot, actually; Lee karate-kicks himself off the top of a building.) *THE LAST OF SHEILA* (1973), a star-studded puzzle in which a game of guilty secrets spells murder, was directed by Herbert Ross from a script by Stephen Sondheim and Anthony Perkins.

Oddly, there are relatively few instances of Hollywood horror. *HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER* (1958) teams the Teenage Werewolf (Gary Clarke) and Teenage Frankenstein (Gary Conway) for some minor mayhem set at American International. *TARGETS* (1968) has bogeyman Boris Karloff as a legendary star retiring in the belief that his fright flicks can't compete with societal violence. The inmates of *MADHOUSE* (1974) include Vincent Price as a



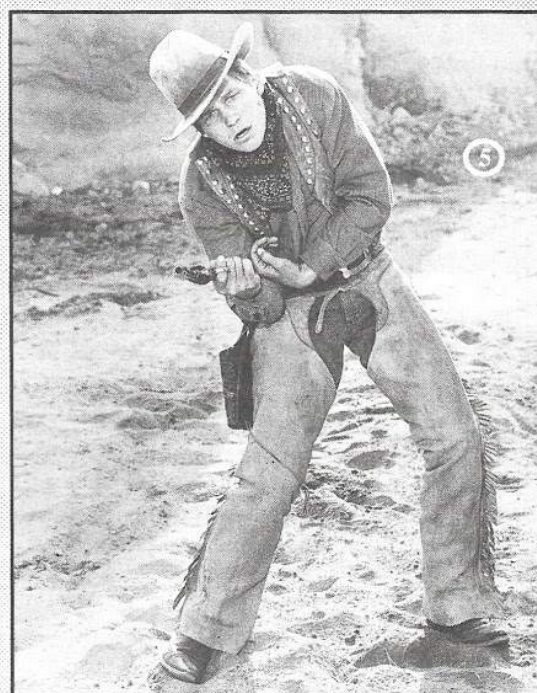
*Debbie Reynolds starred opposite Gene Kelly in 1952's SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, a shimmering MGM musical set in Hollywood during the uneasy advent of "talkies."*



# HOLLYWOOD PARTY



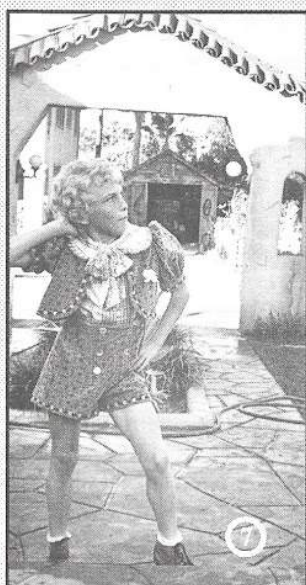
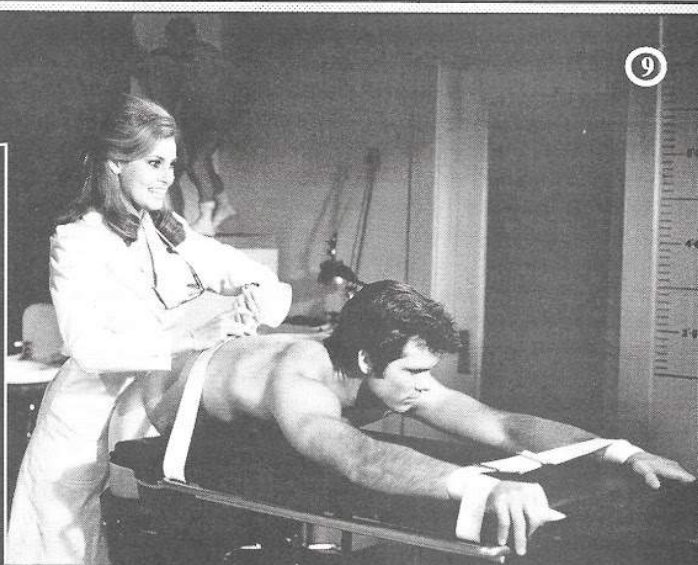
Here's a gaggle of Hollywood hits and misses. To identify the movies pictured, see page 100.



horror star attempting to make a comeback. (He is thwarted—at least initially—by Peter Cushing.) Perhaps the prime purveyor of Movieland chills is novelist/screenwriter Henry Farrell, whose thriller about the celebrated Hudson sisters became the occasion for the sole on-screen pairing of Bette Davis and Joan Crawford: 1962's *WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?* Farrell kept the questions coming fast and bloody with 1971's *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, starring Shelley Winters and Debbie Reynolds (whose work in this subgenre includes the aforementioned *THREE LITTLE WORDS*, *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN*, and *GOODBYE CHARLIE*). For the most part, though, Hollywood has set its horror stories in the quaint European villages decorating the far-off reaches of its own studio backlots.

To be fair, it isn't only Hollywood interested in Hollywood. Tinseltown's East Coast rival, Broadway, began getting its licks in early: George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly's *MERTON OF THE MOVIES*, based on a novel by Harry Leon Wilson, hit the Great White Way in 1922. Film versions followed in 1924, 1932, and 1947. Kaufman's first teaming with Moss Hart resulted in 1930's *ONCE IN A*





LIFETIME and its 1932 Warner Bros. production. The publicity monster that was David O. Selznick's search for the perfect actress to play Scarlett O'Hara in his film version of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (Macmillan, 1936) was dutifully spoofed by Clare Booth Luce in 1938's *KISS THE BOYS GOODBYE* (lensed in 1941, well after the 1939 Civil War epic had become the official Greatest Movie Ever Made). The legitimate stage continued to blast the movie capital with not-so-friendly fire in such later, explosive dramas as Clifford Odet's *THE BIG KNIFE* (1949, filmed in 1955) and Tennessee Williams' *SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH* (1959, filmed—some say gutted—in 1962).

And let's not forget that literary no-man's-land that is the Great Hollywood Novel. Writers venturing into this dangerous territory carry with them some heavy baggage: namely, the popular notion that the Great Hollywood Novel has never been written, and never *will* be written, because it is impossible to write. Noted scribes who haven't quite managed it include John Dos Passos (1936's *The Big Money*), Aldous Huxley (1939's *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1941's unfinished *The Last Tycoon*, filmed in

1976), Budd Schulberg (1941's *What Makes Sammy Run*, musicalized in 1964), Norman Mailer (1955's *The Deer Park*), and Joan Didion (1970's *Play It As It Lays*, filmed in 1972). Even Harold Robbins (1961's *The Carpetbaggers*) and Jackie Collins (1983's *Hollywood Wives*, televised in 1985) couldn't pull it off.

In the estimation of many critics, the novel that comes closest to achieving Hollywood Greatdom is Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939, filmed in 1975). Strangely, its brilliance lies in the fact that West chose for his *dramatis personae* not the movers and shakers of the movie capital but the losers and washouts. Imagine a novelist bypassing Kubrick and Hitchcock in favor of such auteurs as Edward D. Wood, Jr. (1959's *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE*) and Tom Graeff (1959's *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*) and you'll have a fair idea of what West was about. (If you're not a reader, simply wait for Tim Burton's coming biopic of Wood, starring Johnny Depp as La La Land's favorite—but far from only—cross-dresser.)

*Continued on page 100*  
 SCARLET STREET 53



In 1970, Farrell's three-surprise novel *How Awful About Allan* was adapted by the author for an ABC telefilm, resulting in his first collaboration with Curtis Harrington. (Produced by Aaron Spelling, the movie starred Anthony Perkins, Julie Harris, and Joan Hackett, and featured horror vets Kent Smith and Robert H. Harris.) *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, scripted by Farrell as a contemporary chiller, contains several shocks and surprises as well, but differs substantially from the writer's previous output. Harrington's decision to place the story in 1930s Hollywood adds a veneer of gentle nostalgia absent from most of *BABY JANE* and *CHARLOTTE*. Nor are Adelle and Helen, at least initially, "locked into a relationship of psychotic dependency." Baby Jane and Blanche have been tearing each other apart for years. Charlotte and Miriam (Davis and De Havilland) reunite as Charlotte is forced to abandon her Southern Gothic mansion. But Adelle and Helen are optimistically looking toward the future. Simply put, there is a glimmer of hope for the two women, hope that they may yet put their lives in order, hope that makes their final descent into madness and murder all the more sad and unsettling.

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Following the credits, *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* quickly establishes its leads and sets up much of the suspense to follow. Driving to her dance school, Adelle learns that someone cut Helen's hand while she made her way through the angry crowd in front of the courthouse. At the school, Adelle, her nerves frayed, offers the wounded woman a shot of gin; Helen, the more practical of the two, suggests that a first-aid kit might be more suitable to the occasion. She also shows Adelle how to properly dress the wound. ("Iodine first, dear.")

Helen's hand bandaged, Adelle accepts her own offer of gin. (Clearly, she's a woman not given to acting sensibly in a crisis.) Dialogue establishes the facts that Helen is religious and that Adelle plans to give up her school and open a new one ("just for kids") in Hollywood.

*Helen:* Adelle, won't you mind being so far away from your boy?

*Adelle:* Of course I will, but what can I do about it? He turned on me. He really turned on me, Helen—you saw. I just don't understand it. I did everything I could for him. It wasn't my fault that his father took a powder.

Helen approaches Adelle and, smiling sympathetically, puts a hand tentatively to her cheek, stopping just short of actually touching her friend. (It is a gesture that will virtually be repeated in the final, blood-soaked minutes of the film.)

*Helen:* You know—Adelle—men can be quite a bit lower than the angels.

Subtly, almost as tentatively as the touch, the film addresses Helen's lesbianism and connects it (through her reference to angels) to the piety which makes it impossible to acknowledge. Immediately the phone rings; it is the hoarse, menacing voice of the man who cut Helen. Adelle takes the phone from the stunned woman, and is herself sent into a state of panic:

*Voice:* Those boys should have gone to the gal-lows. Somebody's got to pay for what they did to Ellie—and somebody's going to. You and her. Wherever you are . . .

Adelle hangs up. Helen, her practicality coming to the fore, starts to phone the police, but Adelle, frightened by the thought of further publicity, begs her to reconsider. The caller, she reasons, may be just a harmless crank. In answer, Helen holds up her bandaged hand.

Unlike many such setups (for instance, in 1960's *MID-NIGHT LACE* and 1971's *WHEN MICHAEL CALLS*), there is no question that the threatening phone calls are anything other than genuine. Both Adelle and Helen hear the voice. After the scene's second call, which comes moments after Adelle asks Helen to join her in California, the man is glimpsed through the dance-school window as he leaves a phone booth across the street. It is Adelle's inability to face the situation, both here and later, in California, that isolates Helen and turns her increasingly toward religious salvation—specifically, to the reassuring voice of Sister Alma (Agnes Moorehead) on the radio. Still, the scene ends on an optimistic note, with Adelle's cry of "California, here we come!"

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"It was fun," said Yvette Vickers of her role as a cigarette-smoking stage mother in *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (*Scarlet Street* #7) "I had some good moments, and one closeup that I loved, with Debbie Reynolds watching the show. It was a marvelous moment, and I think they cut it out." Yvette, her blonde locks hennaed ("Once I had red hair, a lot of people wanted to paint me") figures prominently in the opening California scenes. To the tune of "Goody, Goody" (music by Matt Malneck, lyrics by Johnny Mercer), the young girl students of Adelle Stewart's Academy of the Dance follow a tap routine set by the now-platinum-blonde Adelle.

*Adelle:* I am Jean Harlow, definitely . . . They call her the Blonde Bombshell.

*Helen:* Oh, I see! That's why you changed the color of your hair. Oh, but you're much prettier . . .

*Adelle:* We could be sisters.

Not only has Adelle changed her hair, she's rechristened herself and her friend (Helen's new surname is Martin) and seeks to transform Helen into glamorous Marion Davies. (In revenge, perhaps, for Hearst's trial coverage; Davies was well-known as Hearst's movie-star mistress.) Helen, "a country girl at heart," keeps rabbits in the yard. There's also money in the air: Adelle's favored student, Winona Palmer (Sammee Lee Jones), has a rich Texas daddy, Linc (Dennis Weaver), who is conveniently separated from his wife. The one potential cloud on the horizon (aside from the noisy construction in front of a nearby theatre playing Karloff and Lugosi in 1934's *THE BLACK CAT*) is Hamilton Starr (Michael MacLiammoir), a flamboyant elocution teacher who wishes to hitch his tongue-waggin' to a star. Adelle takes him on in order to extend her curriculum, but Helen, less versed in the ways of "the profession," is leery. (Starr's first two entrances give rise to sharp screams from the edgy woman, as does his final, enigmatic appearance.)



If the future looks clear, the murky past keeps asserting itself. While Adelle cuts Helen's hair, preparatory to restyling it in a Davies look, Helen makes one of those sudden, impulsive gestures that punctuates the film, grabbing the scissors. The action provokes unwanted recollections of earlier days, but it isn't her son who's on Helen's mind: It's her husband, Matt (Gary Combs), and his gruesome death under the sharp, heavy blades of some farm equipment. Helen's responsibility for Matt's death is implied by the ambiguity of her statements: "And then the harness *seemed* to come loose and Matt got off to fix it. And then *something* frightened the horses and I couldn't hold them." If Helen didn't undo the harness, it is at least likely that, unable to bear the touch of a man, she deliberately let the animals plow her husband. (It's a case in which sex really has frightened the horses!)

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*Farrell, recalled for WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? and other shockers, gives both femme stars many extensive scenes. For Miss Reynolds, film is a change of pace—but not quite, since she is featured in some plot-logical singing-dancing numbers. Miss Winters' role is one she can do in her sleep, though she is mostly awake herein.*

—Murf, *Variety*

HELEN's midsection chronicles the title character's descent into madness. Guilt (over her husband's death, her son's imprisonment, and her "unnatural" love for Adelle) and fear (of retribution at the hands of the mysterious caller) play a large part in her fall, but so does jealousy: Helen's loss of control begins when Lincoln Palmer enters the picture, and is fired by her observation of the tycoon kissing Adelle after a night on a gambling ship. (The ship-board sequence gives Debbie Reynolds the chance to perform a hot tango with dancer Swen Swenson, best known for his "I've Got Your Number" striptease in the 1962 Broadway musical *LITTLE ME*.) When Adelle tells Helen, who has spent the evening pathetically decorating the school for an upcoming recital, that Linc has offered to produce the event at a theatre, Helen raises her voice to Adelle for the first time. ("But it's our recital!") She quickly mentions the jailbird sons as a means of derailing the budding relationship, but succeeds only in angering the object of her affection. ("Helen, you do act like a killjoy sometimes.")

The recital (called the Kiddystar Revue and similar to the Meglin Kiddies shows of the period) gives Curtis Harrington a chance to indulge a love for musicals in several numbers that, for all their campy charm, never veer into parody. Curly-topped Winona sings "Animal Crackers in My Soup" (introduced by Shirley Temple in 1935's aptly-titled *CURLY TOP*). Another child, Rosalie Greenbaum (Robbi Morgan), emulates Mae West with "Oh, You Nasty Man" (which was actually introduced by Alice Faye in 1934's *GEORGE WHITE'S SCANDALS*). Meanwhile, Helen slowly unravels while sewing costumes backstage. Staring at a tabletop fan, she imagines its whirling blades to be those of the killer plow. Touching it, she cuts her hand. Strangely, one of Helen's hallucinations is of Ellie Banner's body. (Harrington cuts to a quick closeup of Ellie's hand; her palm, like Helen's when she was wounded in front of the courthouse and again when she

sliced herself on the fan blades, is filled with blood.) Collapsing in hysterics, Helen disrupts Adelle's big number, a "salute to our president" called "Military on Parade."

The recital is forgotten, though, in the light of later events. Watching from the studio living quarters as Adelle and Linc kiss in his car, Helen spies the Braddock mystery caller standing across the street. Minutes later, after Adelle has entered the building and partially undressed, the phone rings. (Arguing with Adelle, Helen nevertheless finds time to give her companion the once-over.) The next day, Helen raises the roof on finding a knifed, blood-stained standee of Adelle in the cellar. Later still, Helen receives a letter addressed to Helen Hill and Linc is sent news clippings exposing Adelle as a murderer's mom.

*Linc:* Must have come from one of those nuts who sign themselves a well-wisher.

*Adelle:* Yes. That's who it must have been . . . a well-wisher.

Obviously, and despite mounting evidence to the contrary, Adelle suspects Helen of being that "well-wisher." Her deteriorating mental state notwithstanding, Helen views the situation more clearly:

*Helen:* There is someone out there seeking revenge on us—despite your social preoccupations. You remember, he cut my hand. You heard his phone calls. He stabbed your cutout. Adelle, did you ever take a good look at Ellie Banner's face? Look!

*Adelle:* No, thank you.

*Helen:* She was a working woman just like us. About the same age. So our sons really wanted to kill us. They hated us. That was the substitute revenge. I am not like you, Adelle. I'm not trying to buy back my son's love by charming some rich man to help him.

Bitter recriminations follow, and Adelle insists that Helen get out. After Adelle leaves for a date with Linc, Helen quietly fondles her loved one's underthings—until a sudden downstairs noise launches the film into its final, dizzying plot permutations.

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"I've got this movie called *WHAT HAPPENED TO HELEN?* or *WHERE'S AUNT HELEN?* or something like that," gushed Shelley Winters to the *New York Times* in 1971. "Anyway, it's about two women during the 30s who run a school to turn out Shirley Temples, and in my next scene I have to stab Debbie Reynolds to death. Poor Debbie—they'd better not give me a real knife."

It wasn't that Winters and Reynolds, emulating Crawford and Davis, were feuding. The actress was simply up-set that, due to filming, she had to miss the opening night of her Off-Broadway play *ONE NIGHT STANDS OF A NOISY PASSENGER* in New York.

"This movie with Debbie Reynolds could be quite interesting, I think," continued the effervescent Oscar-winner. "I hope Debbie can carry it off. She's not such a bad actress, do you think? I mean, she wasn't so bad in *MOLLY BROWN*, was she? If she asks me to make any little suggestions, I think I may suggest that she change her name. No woman her age should be called Debbie."





**LEFT:** Adelle (Debbie Reynolds) tries to recreate Helen (Shelley Winters) in the image of movie-star Marion Davies. **RIGHT:** One of Helen's many tentative gestures, this time with a blood-soaked hand as the film nears its shocking conclusion.

The scenes leading to Adelle's murder (no big secret, thanks to the film's mismanaged publicity campaign) begin with the arrival at the school of a man (Harry Stanton) seeking Helen Hill. Frightened out of her wits, Helen shoves the man down the stairs, killing him. (As Helen stares at the body on the floor below, it becomes, to her mind, the mutilated corpse of her husband Matt.) Hours later, Adelle returns to find Helen in the dark and the body in a pool of blood on the floor. A letter in the victim's coat pocket identifies him as an employee of a company that locates missing heirs: A relative of Helen's has died in West Virginia. Hysterically, Adelle slaps Helen across the face with the letter. ("Is there any reason why I should have to start all over again? Again?") Helen reaches for the phone, but this time it isn't to call the police. Searching her frazzled mind for someone who can save them, she hits on Linc. Adelle grabs the phone:

*Adelle:* Your son took away one love, and you're not going to take away Linc! We'll get rid of him, Helen. Together.

The subsequent scene is one that Debbie Reynolds, mindful of her "goody goody" image, fought hard against filming. Harrington stood firm, though, and the star, having finally acquiesced, plays it brilliantly. In the dead of night, Adelle and Helen carry the corpse into the deserted, rain-swept street and dump it in the construction ditch. (Before being disposed of, the body falls on top of Adelle, who responds with a fine fit of hysteria.) The action restores their relationship; whatever comes, Adelle and Helen's fates are irrevocably entwined:

*Helen:* Adelle? You and me, we're gonna be together again—just like we were. Just us together. Friends.  
*Adelle:* Yes. Friends.

Even so, Adelle doesn't trust her "friend" to keep their secret, and with just cause. Racked by guilt, Helen steals away, hoping to confess her sins to greedy Sister Alma. The religious leader (a wicked take on Aimee Semple McPherson) is more interested in the wedding ring Helen tosses into the golden cash basket than in the disturbed woman's sal-

vation. ("I told you, God forgives you. Take my word for it.") Adelle arrives and tries to keep Helen from spilling the beans; frustrated, Helen blames Adelle for making her carry the burden of her sins. Back home, preparing to leave for a game of miniature golf with Linc, Adelle lays down the law:

*Adelle:* All I want you to do is get well as soon as possible and then I want you to go away as far as possible.

During the game, Linc proposes marriage, and suggests that he and Adelle marry that very night. Adelle returns home to pack, happily singing "Bye Bye Blackbird," and finds the school a rabbit's chancel house. Helen, her last vestige of sanity gone, explains:

*Helen:* I couldn't leave my poor little creatures, could I? I mean, I love them. You know, that's exactly what happened with Lennie's father. I had to leave him, too. After awhile, I couldn't stand him. I couldn't stand him to touch me. If you love them, you—you can't just leave them. You have to release them.

Echoing the scene in the Braddock dance school, Helen raises her hand to caress Adelle; her palm is stained with blood. Adelle refuses to believe Helen capable of murder, but Helen, with insight born of madness, puts their entire relationship in perspective:

*Helen:* Adelle, I always told you that I was the guilty one, remember? You wouldn't let me speak, Adelle. You wouldn't help me. You didn't want to hear the truth.

Desperate, Adelle promises to call Sister Alma and let Helen confess her sins, but she makes one last, fatal mistake while dialing the phone: She tells Helen that she's going to wed Linc. Rushing across the kitchen with an upraised knife, Helen stabs Adelle to death. (Over Harrington's objections, the murder, originally planned to rival the shower killing in 1960's *PSYCHO*, was considerably toned down.) Later that night, following an O. Henry twist concerning the mysterious

*Continued on page 98*



# THE CRIME OF THE CENTURY

*There comes a time in the history of every bright boy when a constantly increasing influx of knowledge, the recognition of growth in his own powers of reasoning make him feel he is able to outwit the world if he chooses.*

—Erle Stanley Gardner  
Introduction, *Life Plus 99 Years*

In Patrick Hamilton's play *ROPE* (1929), they are Wyndham Brandon and Charles Granillo (Sebastian Shaw and Anthony Ireland in the Repertory Players premiere, Brian Aherne and Ireland in the West End production), two Oxford undergraduates who strangle fellow undergraduate Ronald Kentley and throw a party in the same room as their victim's corpse.

In Alfred Hitchcock's film *ROPE* (1948), they are Shaw Brandon and Philip (John Dall and Farley Granger), two gay men who murder classmate David Kentley (Dick Hogan), stuff his body in an antique chest, and lay out an elaborate buffet meal for several guests—including David's father (Sir Cedric Hardwicke)—on the chest top.

In Meyer Levin's novel *Compulsion* (1956), they are Artie Straus and Judd Steiner, two law students whose intellectual pretensions and intense relationship—in which Artie consents to sex with Judd in return for Judd's help in committing crimes—lead to murder and life in prison.

In Richard Fleischer's film *COMPULSION* (1959), they are again Artie Straus and Judd Steiner (Bradford Dillman and Dean Stockwell), two college boys who, hoping to prove their intellectual superiority by committing the perfect crime, kill 12-year-old Paulie Kessler and do everything but publicly announce their guilt to the law.

In Curtis Harrington's *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971), they are Leonard Hill and Wesley Bruckner (actors uncredited), two young men who mutilate and murder a woman named Ellie Banner.

In Tom Kalin's *SWOON* (1992), they are at last themselves: Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, Jr. (Daniel Schlachet

and Craig Chester), two law students who kill 14-year-old Bobby Franks, hide his body in a presumably isolated spot, and lose a vital clue to their identities—Leopold's glasses—at the scene of the crime.

The Crime of the Century!

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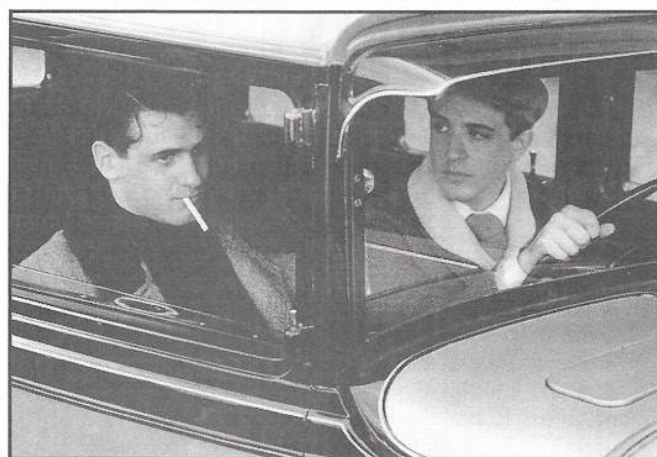
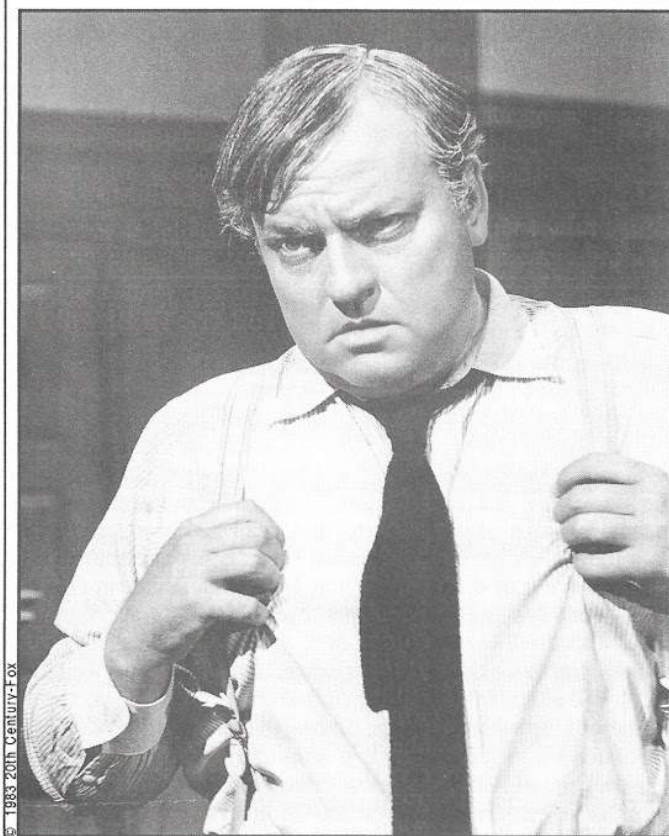
It was presumptuous, perhaps, to pin that label—the Crime of the Century—on a murder that took place after only a quarter of that century had passed, but that is exactly what the nation's crime reporters, public moralists, and sob sisters did, day after day, in newspapers across the land. Not that the tabloids had been hurting for headlines—there'd been the murder of Stanford White by Harry Thaw in 1906, with Thaw's wife, the "girl in the red velvet swing," Evelyn Nesbitt, reaping the meager rewards of its publicity, and 1922 had brought with it both the Hall/Mills murder case in New Jersey and the never-solved slaying of director William Desmond Taylor in Hollywood—but this latest outrage had everything: murder, mutilation, blackmail, bizarre coincidence, fatal mistakes, mystery women, the "love that dare not speak its name," the wealthy laid low by scandal. Then, when it seemed as though nothing new could top what had come before, the Crime of the Century introduced a "superstar" for a stunning final act: Clarence Darrow, one of America's most celebrated lawyers. All things considered, can the country's newsmongers really be blamed for sensationalism? Who knew then that, in the annals of 20th-century crime, Leopold and Loeb merely topped the bill?

In novels and films based on the case, it is always the Richard Loeb character who is the dominant partner, forcing the passive Nathan Leopold character, on threat of the dissolution of their (probably sexual) partnership, to defer to his grandiose schemes. In a few factual reports, however, it was shy, 19-year-old Leopold who espoused the philosophy of Nietzsche, of the "superman," and the socially adept Loeb, a year younger than Leopold, who was content to follow his companion's lead. Paradoxically, Leopold's lead, possibly born of a deep-rooted emotional need to submit to a "superior" being,

**LEFT:** James Stewart as an unlikely proponent of Nietzschean philosophy confronts John Dall and Farley Granger as the Leopold/Loeb stand-ins in Alfred Hitchcock's *ROPE* (1948), based on a play by Patrick Hamilton. **RIGHT:** Judd Steiner and Artie Straus (Dean Stockwell and Bradford Dillman) panic as their perfect murder plot comes undone in *COMPULSION* (1959), based on the best-selling novel by Meyer Levin.







**LEFT:** Orson Welles gave one of his best performances in 1959's *COMPULSION*, playing Jonathan Wilk, a lawyer based on Clarence Darrow. **ABOVE:** Richard Loeb (Daniel Schlachet) and Nathan Leopold, Jr. (Craig Chester) in 1992's *SWOON*, directed by Tom Kalin.

was to insist on Loeb's taking command of the alliance, with Leopold as his willing disciple. This resulted, first, in the relatively minor theft of a typewriter from the University of Michigan, and, ultimately, on May 21, 1924, in murder and blackmail. (In that order: Bobby Franks was already dead, his body stripped, splashed on the face and genitals with hydrochloric acid, and deposited in a culvert, before the boy's father ever received a ransom demand—which incidentally, was typed on the stolen typewriter.)

The mistakes made by Leopold and Loeb in the execution of their "perfect crime" were legion: Loeb brashly connected his name with the case by offering the police his advice and cooperation (the murdered boy was, after all, a distant cousin); the typewriter was traced to Leopold's house (though, by that time, the machine had been disposed of in a lake); the hired car in which the crime took place had been parked overnight in Leopold's driveway, where the killers, viewed with suspicion by the family chauffeur, had sought to remove some unexpected blood stains; two floozies with whom the boys were purportedly joy-riding at the time of the murder never turned up, due to their lack of existence; and finally, inexorably, Leopold had dropped his glasses near the culvert—glasses with new frames, only three pairs of which had been sold in the Chicago area.

Society demanded the death penalty. Clarence Darrow fought for, and won, life sentences for the boys—plus 99 years for kidnapping. Darrow's summation was one of the most eloquent ever given against capital punishment:

None of us are unmindful of the public; the courts are not, and juries are not. I have stood here for three months as one might stand at the ocean trying to sweep back the tide. I hope the seas are subsiding and the wind is falling, and I believe they are, but I wish to make no false pretense to this court. The easy thing

and the popular thing to do is to hang my clients. I know it. Men and women who do not think will applaud. The cruel will approve. It will be easy today; but in Chicago, and reaching out over the length and breadth of the land, more and more fathers and mothers, the humane, the kind, and the hopeful, who are gaining an understanding and asking questions not only about these poor boys, but about their own—these will join in no acclaim at the death of my clients. These would ask that the shedding of blood be stopped. I know the future is with me and what I stand for here; not merely for the lives of those two unfortunate lads, but for all boys and all girls; for all of the young, and as far as possible, for all of the old. I am pleading for life, understanding, charity, kindness, and the infinite mercy that considers all.

In 1936, 12 years after the murder of Bobby Franks, Richard Loeb died in prison. It was widely reported that he was killed during a riot; in fact, he was slashed to death in the shower, victim of inmate Jimmie Day, who claimed that Loeb had made unwanted sexual advances. (Of course, this does nothing to explain Day's possession of a razor blade in the shower.)

In 1953, Nathan Leopold was denied parole, his case continued another 12 years, to May 1965. The 1956 publication of Meyer Levin's *Compulsion*, Leopold was certain, would further hurt his chances for parole, but in fact the opposite proved to be true—he was helped immeasurably by brisk sales, a movie deal, and a *Coronet* magazine article by Levin entitled "Leopold Should Be Freed!" (Levin was a classmate of the killers and had, in fact, covered the case as a reporter.)

In 1958, Nathan Leopold, Jr. was freed. At the time of his release, he was 53 and had spent 34 years in prison. He died in 1971.

In 1991, *TV Guide* announced LEOPOLD AND LOEB as one of the coming season's "based on actual events" miniseries. Nothing further was heard of the project. Perhaps there was simply too much fresh blood, too many current Crimes of the Century to make a stroll down a murderous memory lane necessary.

—Richard Valley

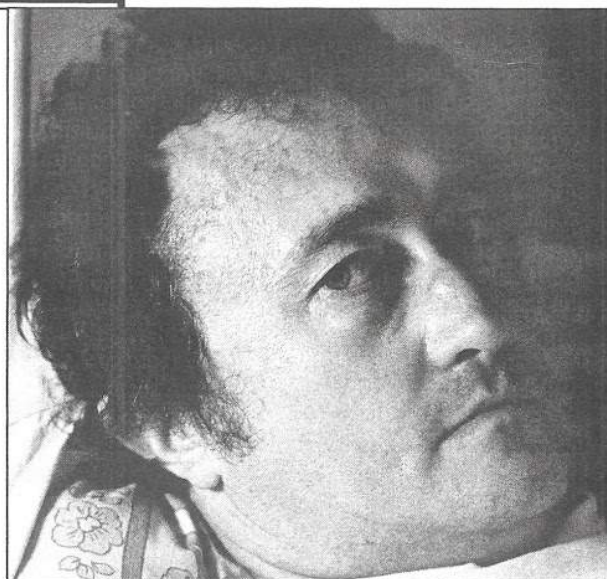


# WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? WHO EVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?

Curtis Harrington has answered those queasy questions in two spine-tingling chillers starring Shelley Winters—but that's not all he's done; he's also told us everything we need to know about **THE KILLING KIND** and the **GAMES** people play. Here, in the first installment of a two-part interview, the erudite director of these cult classics (and more) answers some additional inquiries put to him by *Scarlet Street*. The subjects: Debbie Reynolds, Shelley Winters, Hollywood, the Depression, and HELEN . . . .

# CURTIS HARRINGTON

INTERVIEW BY KEVIN G. SHINNICK



*Scarlet Street: What is the genesis of WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*

**Curtis Harrington:** Well, George Edwards produced **QUEEN OF BLOOD** with me, and then we did **GAMES** together at Universal. After **GAMES**, we were looking for a project. We had had meetings with Henry Farrell, who wrote **WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE**, and he'd written a little outline for a movie called **THE BOX STEP**. As you can tell from the title, it was about a couple of women who ran a contemporary dance studio to teach ballroom dancing. We liked the idea, so we took it to the powers that be at Universal, and they agreed to hire Farrell to write a screenplay. George and I, because we had collaborated on the story of **GAMES**, which was an original, worked very closely with Farrell. I can't recall, in all cases, which ideas were mine and which might have been George's, but we're the ones who influenced Farrell to recreate the whole thing and put it in the 1930s, and center it around a dance school for children. There were many elements that were changed by making it a period story—for example, the idea of the women coming to Los Angeles and changing their identities, and having Debbie Reynolds made up to look like Jean Harlow. Thousands and thousands of women in America tried to look like Jean Harlow in the 30s. A lot of the ambience was based on memories of my own childhood; I was born and raised in Los Angeles.

**SS:** Universal turned it down.

**CH:** Yes. After we got it all developed, Universal turned it down because we couldn't cast it to their satisfaction. We first tried to get Shirley MacLaine for the Debbie Reynolds role, and she was not interested in it. Then we tried to get Joanne Woodward,





**WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN** suffered more cuts at the hands of producer Martin Ransohoff than Debbie Reynolds did at the hands of Shelley Winters, but director Curtis Harrington managed to include a much-desired street scene with a child actress, a stage mother, and a little person.

and Joanne was not interested in it. Finally, the studio said, "If you can make it someplace else, you can have the rights for a certain price." So we kept pushing it, because, in effect, we had a free option on it. Finally we interested Debbie Reynolds in it.

**SS:** It was a departure for her.

**CH:** Well, she was intrigued, you know? At that point in her career, she wanted to change her image, wanted a challenge. And this was a great challenge, because she was no longer playing Miss Goodie Two Shoes.

**SS:** She was playing against her image.

**CH:** I won't say she's extremely religious, but she's definitely from a Christian background; I'm sure she went to Sunday School as a little girl, and her parents are Christians. Religion is certainly part of Debbie's life, and, like many actresses, she didn't want to seem unsympathetic. The scene that really bothered her was the one in which she insists that they dispose of the body in the gutter. We had long discussions about that. She said, "I don't want to play that scene." I said, "But it's mandatory. You're fighting for your life. Helen wants to call the police, and that would ruin your relationship with Linc, so you have to get rid of the body and it's you who must take the initiative." She said, "Well, couldn't Shelley do

it and then, at the last minute, I just happen to look up and she's already pulling the body out of the door?" And I said, "No! It is dramatically obligatory!" Finally, she realized the truth of that and agreed to play the scene. She did it very well.

**SS:** It's a very powerful moment. The fact that it's Debbie Reynolds disposing of a body adds something to it.

**CH:** Maybe so. Of course, I think an actress should divorce herself from the roles she plays, but stars are very protective of their image. They want to be loved by the public; they have this idea that, if they play a role of questionable moral character, the character's morality will reflect on them and they'll lose some admirers. It's a very curious phenomenon, but I've encountered it many times with actresses.

**SS:** She was doing a TV show at the time on NBC.

**CH:** Yes. Martin Ransohoff was the executive producer of the film, and it was made through Filmways, who got Debbie her NBC deal and some financing for a feature or two. NBC, of course, had first television rights to HELEN; it was one of the bases for putting it together.

**SS:** Were they surprised when she brought this kind of project to them?

**CH:** Well, I imagine! I don't know if they had approval of the project or not; I don't remember NBC's attitude toward it being discussed.

**SS:** How did Shelley Winters become involved in HELEN?

**CH:** Well, I had known Shelley socially for a long time. Casting her was my idea, definitely, and we had no problem with Shelley. She agreed to do the role right off. I think it's one of her best performances.

**SS:** Yes, definitely.

**CH:** It was a very uncharacteristic performance of Shelley's. Very subdued. For one thing, she's Jewish and she played a Protestant, a middle-western Protestant, in the film, and I thought she did it extremely well. I mean, for someone who usually plays loud-mouthed Jewish mamas, it's almost the opposite of her usual kind of role.

**SS:** Were Helen and Adelle's two sons based on Leopold and Loeb?

**CH:** Yes. Not in any specific way, but the idea for it was generated by the Leopold and Loeb case.

**SS:** When Adelle claims that Helen's son stole her son from her, it's hinted that, like Leopold and Loeb, the two boys are lovers.

**CH:** Really, we weren't thinking along those lines when we made the film. We were only thinking of it in terms of two boys being friendly. It doesn't necessarily mean any kind of a homosexual relationship, and one boy influencing the other, you know, in a bad way. What you're suspecting comes right out of today's attitudes, but not 1971's.



**HELEN's subplot with Michael MacLiammoir was a red herring, says Harrington. MacLiammoir is pictured with Shelley Winters and a wascally friend.**



**SS:** Helen, however, did not like being touched by her husband...

**CH:** Right.

**SS:** ... and she seems to have a sexual interest in Adelle.

**CH:** Oh, well, yes! That's definitely in the film. The unspoken lesbian feelings of Helen are very intentional. And Shelley played it that way. If you'll remember, for instance, the little thing that Shelley does when the phone rings and Debbie comes out of her room in her teddie—the way Shelley looks at her, because she's partially nude. I mean, it's subtle, but it's very much there if you'll observe it in the film. Just the way she looks at her.

**SS:** It comes across very well.

**CH:** Even when she picks up Debbie's teddie from the bed and presses it to her face, you know?

**SS:** Martin Ransohoff was notorious for meddling with his directors.

**CH:** He was the producer of Roman Polanski's *THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*. Roman hated him and hates him to this day with an abiding passion. He cut and changed *THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*. I didn't have that many problems with him. Two things, key things, happened, and one was a real infringement on my artistic prerogative as the director. I had designed a couple of dissolves in the film, as I had done in *GAMES*, and he just arbitrarily announced, when we were at the cutting stage, that he didn't like dissolves, that these would have to be cut. Those people have power, unfortunately, and I didn't have final cut in my contract. To get as much of it as I wanted there to be, I had to use diplomacy. I wanted to have the little moment with the midget lady....

**SS:** The scene on the street?

**CH:** He would have cut that out as being totally irrelevant. So, before he had a chance to mention it, I said, "The one thing, Marty, that I really want, that is most personally important to me in this film, is the scene with the midget." It wasn't true, but I said it, so that he would be intimidated enough to leave it, while he would feel free to tamper with other parts of the film. The other thing that happened was in the climactic stabbing scene with Debbie Reynolds. I wanted to make it as harrowing and brutal as the shower scene in *PSYCHO*. I did, and it was cut 'way, 'way, 'way down. They decided that they wanted to make more money, the idea being that more people could see the film if they made it PG, which meant minimizing the violence. There's another moment they cut out. Very often, after people commit a crime or something like a crime together, it almost brings on a sexual tension.

**SS:** Yes.

**CH:** And Shelley said, "What I want to do is let the lesbian thing really come out for a moment, after they've gotten rid of the body and returned to the room in the dance studio." She wanted to grab Debbie and kiss her on the lips. We shot it, but, of course, it couldn't be in a PG-rated film. So it was cut.

**SS:** Was anything cut from the subplot with *Hamilton Starr*? As it stands, it seems to lack a payoff.

**CH:** That was just a very intentional red herring. There wasn't supposed to be any payoff. I did that on purpose—whether you like it or not. (Laughs)

**SS:** Do any of the missing scenes still exist? Is there a chance we'll see a director's cut someday?

**CH:** I doubt it. I seriously doubt it. In fact, I'm always astonished when they find these bits and pieces of footage, because it's the usual practice not to keep all that stuff in storage after a film is made and released.

**SS:** Didn't you help restore *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*?

**CH:** Well, that wasn't restoring lost footage. I merely was involved in making sure that the negative was taken out of the vault before it deteriorated further, and having it copied and put on acetate film. It's a wonderful film. The problem with *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* is that the story rights reverted to the author and he resold them to Columbia. William Castle made that very bad remake and so, even though Universal owns the print and the negative, they do not own the story rights; they have no commercial interests. It's not something they can release to television, for instance. Part of my problem in restoring the film was getting permission from the Columbia legal department to allow Universal to make new prints, with the strict understanding that they would not be released commercially.

**SS:** Getting back to *HELEN*—were you commenting on motherhood?

**CH:** Only insofar as it was about ambitious stage mothers. The three mothers, all being so concerned about how their daughters are seen—the only comment, really, was about ambitious stage mothers and how they corral their children and push them around.

**SS:** There is a very domineering mother in your short film *ON THE EDGE*.

So you met someone and  
now you know how it feels.  
Goody, Goody\*



**CH:** All in the eye of the beholder! I have never explained *ON THE EDGE*. I've never explained it, because I don't want to explain it. The imagery will evoke whatever it evokes in each viewer and that's it. It's a work of modern art. (Laughs)

**SS:** Yvette Vickers played one of the stage mothers in *HELEN*. In her *Scarlet Street* interview, she said you asked her to dye her hair red.

**CH:** I didn't want any other obvious blondes in the film to compete with Debbie, with Debbie's image.

**SS:** We understand that you were very upset with the film's ad campaign.

**CH:** Extremely. That picture you're going to use on the cover of *Scarlet Street*—I was appalled by it, frankly. When we took that still on the set, I told everyone, including the producers and the powers that be, that it was done with great reticence. I said, "All right, we'll make a still of this, but only for the record. It is not to be released. It is not to be put in the lobbies of theatres. It is not to be put





**Curtis Harrington confers with stars Shelley Winters and Debbie Reynolds on the set of 1971's *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?***

in magazines. I don't want that photo out at all, because that image is the surprise at the end of the film." I loved the way everyone was so protective about the plot gimmick in *THE CRYING GAME*; I mean, every reviewer was scrupulous about not revealing it; every person who'd seen it just said, "You must see it." But *HELEN* was the exact opposite! The publicity department chose to reveal the ending of the film on the poster! I can't tell you how furious I was. This all happened when I was in Europe, making *WHO EVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?* It was all beyond my control. George Edwards was a bit of a milksop when it came to fighting for things; he was a wonderful line producer, but a producer has to be a lot more than the manager of the physical elements of the production. He has to deal with all those sons-of-bitches in the front office, and George was very weak about that. I was angry at George for letting it happen; I felt he should have fought tooth and nail to prevent it. To this day, it's one of the worst moments in my career, that rotten poster—besides the fact that it was so cheaply put out. It was a hideous poster! And it was stupid! I mean, so stupid! There were two executive producers: Marty Ransohoff and Ed Feldman, whose name you've probably seen on many films since then; he's produced many, many, many pictures over the last 15 years. This was Ed Feldman's first film as executive producer, and his back-

ground was in publicity. He had personally promised me that he would supervise the publicity for the film, and make sure that it was absolutely first rate. He completely deserted me; he completely turn-coated, did absolutely nothing to help the publicity of the film. And the history—the brutal history—is the fact that United Artists took it for distribution. United Artists had put a great deal of money into *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*, and they were waiting for its fall release. They also had one of the James Bond films; they had these two major productions, and the company wasn't that strong, and they wanted to put everything into advertising James Bond and *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*. Since they hadn't financed *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, they used it for what they call summer cash flow. Whatever money came in was just gravy for them, and they didn't have to do anything about publicizing it. And to pile insult on injury, not only did they not bother to publicize it in any way, but they put out that atrocious poster!

**SS:** *It's a shame.*

**CH:** Really! I mean, the whole history is so sad. It came out at the very height of one of those waves of interest in the 30s, the imagery of the 30s, the clothes of the 30s—and they didn't even hint that the film had anything to do with the 30s! They could have capitalized on it, because it was the craze at the moment. They had a cover story in *Time* just around that time, about how every-

one was mad for the 30s. And you wouldn't have had a clue about *HELEN* having anything to do with the 30s!

**SS:** *The period musical numbers were so well done. Have you ever wanted to make a musical?*

**CH:** Oh, yes! Yes, I had great fun with those. I would love to direct a musical, but that occasion has never arisen, nor have I actively pursued it. I'm still more interested in doing other things, but if the challenge were presented to me, I would love it. I had great fun with the central musical sequence with the children.

**SS:** *Whose choice was it to use the song "Goody, Goody" for the film?*

**CH:** That's one of the things I can't recall. I don't know whether we listened to a lot of 30s tunes, or David Raksin mentioned it as a possibility. I do remember that David Raksin and I went to a collector of records, because I wanted to have absolutely authentic 1930s orchestration. It was very important to me. We played records from that period at a collector's house, and I said, "Now, I want you to put together exactly the same combination of instruments"—because most contemporary films, when they play music from the 30s, reorchestrate it so it doesn't remotely sound like the period.

**SS:** *The film has a wonderful period feel to it. Was it a big-budget film?*

**CH:** I guess at the time it was sort of medium. I think it was budgeted at around a million five or something like that. One of the things I've talked about recently to friends, and that is fascinating to me, is that the film contains a scene—the scene with Timothy Carey as the tramp, coming to the door and asking for money—that I devised because I wanted something that was the quintessential representative of the days of the Depression. Anyone of any cultural awareness or sensitivity would see that as, quintessentially, a moment from the 30s. I remember it from my childhood: tramps coming to the door and asking for a handout. And so we wrote it and shot it, and when it was shown in 1971, that scene was an anomaly. Then recently, I ran the tape for some younger friends of mine, and I realized, as they were sitting there watching the film complacently, that they were watching 1992 in that scene. I think it's very interesting how that reflects the terrible thing that happened to this country under the Reagan/Bush administration, the degree to which this country has been lowered by the political right wing.

**SS:** *Was the film inspired by Nathanael West's novel *The Day of the Locust*?*

**CH:** Yes. I mean, to me it was the same essential world as *The Day of the Locust*. I did not like John Schle-





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**LEFT:** Adelle and Helen (Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters) receive threatening calls at the beginning of *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971). **RIGHT:** Helen visits Sister Alma (Agnes Moorehead) to confess her sins, which include killing both her husband and a presumably innocent man.

singer's film version, I might add. He made that after I made *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, and he borrowed one of my inventions and used it in *DAY OF THE LOCUST*. It's not in the novel.

**SS:** Which invention was this?

**CH:** The evangelist played by Agnes Moorehead. Even to having the corsage on her shoulder, you know? That was all my creation; that was all my idea. It wasn't Henry Farrell's. John Schlesinger obviously saw it and just put that character into *DAY OF THE LOCUST*—played by Geraldine Page.

**SS:** Are there any final remarks you'd like to make about *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*

**CH:** Well, I think it's the film that is closest to my heart; it's my favorite

among my films, and what can I say? My only regret is that it couldn't have been left intact, the way I originally cut it. I think that's the regret of a lot of directors, though. The terrible problem, the basic problem, I think, in the film business, is the fact that there aren't more sympathetic film executives, who are more on the side of the artists than their own ideas of commerce. That's the problem: People who are creative and artistic don't want to be executives, you see? So the person who wants to be an executive is a different breed of human being, and there is this terrible, constant dichotomy between the creator and the people who are power-hungry and control the power. At least, in the old days, the great moguls were picture makers. They interfered a lot, too,

but they loved picture making; they talked about pictures. Now, the executives talk about deals, and most of what you see on the screen today is a deal, it's not a picture. When I began my career, working for the late Jerry Wald—and he was a picture maker, for better or worse—it was always the idea of the film. All he talked about was what was going up there on the screen and what it meant and what it was about—you know, story, story, story! That's not true anymore. The shoddy writing of films today, the indifference—I mean, how many scenes of violence can we get in it? How many car chases can we put into it? It's so transparent, and so boring, and yet the great unwashed seem to support those dreadful films.

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# CHILLING WINTERS

## SHELLEY WINTERS TALKS ABOUT WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?

### INTERVIEW BY JESSIE LILLEY

Photo this page © 1971 United Artists Corporation

The facts are well-documented for those who have read her two autobiographical volumes. Born Shirley Schrift in St. Louis. Raised in Brooklyn. Store clerk. Model. Chorus girl. Actress in such memorable films as *A DOUBLE LIFE* (1948), *A PLACE IN THE SUN* (1951), *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER* (1955), and *LOLITA* (1962). Oscar-winning actress in *THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK* (1959) and *A PATCH OF BLUE* (1965). The Marx Brothers' mother in Broadway's *MINNIE'S BOYS* (1970). Author of the Off-Broadway play *ONE NIGHT STANDS OF A NOISY PASSENGER* (1972). Star of the camp classics *WILD IN THE STREETS* (1968) and *THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE* (1972). Talk-show guest. Semi-regular on *ROSEANNE*. Tchatchke collector. Recently, *Scarlet Street* invaded Shelley Winters' home for a few words about her riveting performance in *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1972). What we got were a few words, and then some!

*Scarlet Street:* We want to thank you for your time.

**Shelley Winters:** Hold on. Will you clear off the table? These are things I bought at the antique show.

**SS:** You're an antiques fan?

**SW:** Well, a little bit. My two apartments, New York and here, are furnished in Early Relative. I'm getting too many tchatchkes around. It's gonna be me or them or the books!

**SS:** We want to know how you became involved with *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*

**SW:** Well, I'll tell you kind of a funny thing. I'll tell you why I did the picture to begin with. I wrote a play called *ONE NIGHT STANDS OF A NOISY PASSENGER*, in which Sally Kirkland and Peter Master-son—who's a director now—appeared. He was one of the directors at the Actors Studio, and he's a very good actor. But he was in the first act with Sally Kirkland and people you probably wouldn't know: Joanna Miles and Will Geer...

**SS:** Oh, yes.

**SW:** ... and Bobby DeNiro and Diane Ladd. The previews caused me such anxiety that I decided I shouldn't be there for opening night. I tried to figure out what to do, and Curtis Harrington called me

about *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* I said, "Yes, I'll do it." He said, "Don't you want to read the script?" I said, "No! I wanna get out of New York!" And then I found out that

Debbie was gonna do it and I knew her socially for a long, long time. Years and years ago she lived in a little house with a huge swimming pool. When you stepped out back to empty

the garbage, you stepped into the pool. (Laughs) So you had to be very careful or you fell in the pool. We used to play water polo—when? I think it was when I first came out here. You know, this may be a little afterwards; this is 50 years I'm in Hollywood. I came here in '43, during the Second World War. The village. A lovely village. Flowers everywhere, no smog.

**SS:** It was another world.

**SW:** Completely different.

**SS:** Did you read the script?

**SW:** No. But I knew Curtis Harrington socially, and I wanted to get out of New York, because I couldn't stay for the opening night. It was too tense. It was too scary. The name of the play had been *THE WEATHERMAN*, and it was funny because the first act is about the Second World War, and the second act is about Korea and the black list; the third act is about Vietnam.

**SS:** How did the play do?

**SW:** We were in previews for three months and it was great, and then I got mixed reviews.



*Shelley Winters as Helen*





**LEFT:** Shelley Winters played the waitress strangled by an actor (Ronald Colman) who's taken the role of Othello too much to heart in George Cukor's *A DOUBLE LIFE* (1947). **RIGHT:** The rising star didn't make it to the end of George Stevens' *A PLACE IN THE SUN* (1951), either, sinking beneath the waves before Montgomery Clift could kill her properly.

A man who used to be the *Times* critic said I wrote too autobiographically. So it discouraged me and I wrote autobiographies. But then, what do Eugene O'Neill and Neil Simon do?

**SS: Right!**

**SW:** But I don't know; I wrote two autobiographies and I'm working on the third one. Anyway, ask me questions.

**SS:** Were you at all hesitant about appearing in what would be labelled a horror film?

**SW:** No, because, number one, I wouldn't call it a horror film. It was very true to that time—you know, in the 30s, about the two women alone, dancing. I thought it was about a woman who was quite sick and alone, and as the picture progressed, she gets sicker. I found it a very interesting diagnosis. I just did a picture overseas called *SILENCE OF THE HAMS*.

**SS: OF THE HAMS?**

**SW:** It's a satire on *PSYCHO* and *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. I play the mother who keeps exchanging personalities with the son. On *HELEN*, I knew the director, Curtis Harrington, and I knew it would be a classic film. I mean, he's very good. I worked for him a couple more times; I know he did *WHO SLEW AUNTIE ROO?*, but I can't remember what the other one was. I think it was a television show.

**SS: WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?** was a very different sort of project for Debbie Reynolds.

**SW:** Yes. She was very good in it. I think if the picture had been more successful—it's a cult film, I know, but if it had been more successful in terms of publicity, I think she would have had a career as a dramatic actress. But

they were a little scared of it, 'cause I played a lesbian. In those days they were very scared of it. They didn't want me to play it too directly, but I did.

**SS:** Helen's lesbianism is made clear at a time when gay characters were still rare on movie screens.

**SW:** Yeah. I don't know that I saw any other ones. What year was that?

**SS:** The film was released in 1971.

**SW:** Because I did it to get away from the play! I understand what writers go through, after that play!

**SS:** You mentioned that "they" didn't want you to play the lesbianism too directly. Who were "they"? Was there pressure from anyone in particular?

**SW:** Not Curtis Harrington, I think, and neither from George—he's gone now; the producer, George Edwards. It was kind of from the press a little bit, who came on the set. But it had great style—the clothes and the props and the splash of the characters. And there was something very scary about that dancing school. And that wonderful actor from the Abbey Theatre . . .

**SS: Michael MacLiammoir?**

**SW:** He was a big actor in Ireland. The whole thing was very strange and interesting and very Hitchcockian. I wouldn't fool around with the lesbian aspects of it. I felt that, if I killed her out of this crazy, forbidden lust, I had to do it fully—and I tried to. But because of that element, the picture was not publicized very much. You know, it was two decades ago or more, and—I don't know—they sort of sneaked it out, you know? And Curtis was very careful about it, too. I guess you could interpret it either way, but I played it very clearly. I hope I did, anyway.

**SS:** You certainly did.

**SW:** Now that I look back, I don't know whether I would have showed a lesbian as being so crazy. But maybe that's the only way they'd allow it!

**SS:** Maybe.

**SW:** Same as in the film *BASIC INSTINCT*. If you're gonna be a lesbian, you gotta be crazy. (Laughs)

**SS:** The script provides only a little of Helen's background. What kind of life did you envision her as having with her husband, Matt, and what might have led her to kill him?

**SW:** Well, I think she was just surrounded. She had two sons, didn't she?

**SS:** She had one son, Lennie, and Adelle had one son, Wesley.

**SW:** Who's Adelle?

**SS:** Adelle is Debbie Reynolds' character.

**SW:** Oh! I thought there was somebody else on the set! (Laughs) You know, it's a long time ago; this is 1993! I think that Helen only acknowledged her feelings of love for another woman when she became free of her husband, and I think the fact that she was free in some sense, and that her son was in jail, sort of allowed her to blossom. She was a rural farm woman who was very exploited and rather ignorant—feeling very guilty about her son, certainly. Do you think she killed her husband?

**SS:** Yes.

**SW:** I didn't think so till I saw the picture; I thought it was an accident. He got killed in that threshing machine or whatever it was. See, I didn't know how they'd shoot it. Often I'll see a picture and I'll say, "Oh, that's what he meant!" (Laughs) It's a director's medium. And I didn't think it was that clear, if his death was an accident or



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***“Now that I look back, I don’t know whether I would have played a lesbian as being so crazy—but maybe that’s the only way they’d allow it! If you’re gonna be a lesbian, you gotta be crazy!”***

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she did it. When you see it, you realize that she was homicidal, that she must have done it before—but until I’ve viewed it, until I say the lines, I don’t know what I mean. (Laughs) Maybe in conversation, too!

**SS:** *Unlike many of the women that you’ve played, Helen is severely repressed. Her gestures, especially those directed toward Adelle, are very tentative. Is it more difficult to play an inhibited character than it is to play an outgoing one?*

**SW:** For me. Maybe not for other women, but for me it was. *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER*—which some people think is kind of a horror picture, and I guess it is—had a character like that. You know that one? Bob Mitchum?

**SS:** Yes.

**SW:** That woman was tentative; she was kind of hypnotized, and so she couldn’t realize she was in such danger. I talked a great deal with Lillian Gish, who only recently died, on the set between scenes. She said, “It’s very hard for an actor in a director’s medium. They won’t always tell you what’s happening, but the actor must get what the playwright or screenwriter is saying across to the audience.” Sometimes they don’t know ’til the editor gets the whole thing! The kind of beautiful horror that Charles Laughton wanted in *NIGHT OF THE HUNTER*, a kind of strange, beautiful horror—there was a similar thing with Curtis on *WHAT’S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*, the kind of jazzy thing of the 30s. You know, the little kids tap dancing, and the house, and her clothes and fixing her hair—and this kind of retreat for Helen. Getting all these beautiful things and then suddenly it’s gonna be taken away from her. And maybe love! Maybe it’s the first time in her life she had anyone care about her, and the idea of losing it just snapped her. Next question!

**SS:** *Helen and Adelle’s sons, the two boys seen only briefly at the beginning of the movie, were based on Leopold and Loeb . . . .*

**SW:** When we did it, I got the impression from George Edwards that it was a real case about two

boys who had killed a librarian or a teacher or someone like that. The mothers became friends and moved to California, and even had a dancing school. I thought it was a real case.

**SS:** *Throughout the picture, Helen is afraid of Hamilton Starr, the vocal coach. Why?*

**SW:** Oh, I believe it’s because she felt that Adelle would grow away from her. While Adelle was a teacher she needed Helen, but when she became a professional, she wouldn’t need her. Then she began to get more and more irritated with me, and I couldn’t stop; you know, the character couldn’t stop pressuring her.







**THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER** (1955) was the only film directed by Charles Laughton. Shelley Winters (Right) died at midpoint once again, the victim of Robert Mitchum (Center, as Preacher Harry Powell) and a straight razor.

**SS:** Curtis Harrington told us that the scene in which Helen and Adelle dispose of the body was very difficult to film.

**SW:** You know, literal things like that really bother me. In *BLOODY MAMA*, the scene when we had to bury the Bobby DeNiro character, my youngest son, was terrible for me. He was a kid, and I'm crying and screaming by the grave, and I look down and they're tossing dirt and there's Bobby DeNiro under the dirt. I stopped the scene. I said, "You're going to smother! What are you doing?" And he said, "No. It's nec-

essary for you to really see the dirt falling on me." I said, "Don't give me that; I have a powerful imagination! Suppose it caves in?" It was a real grave! So things like that, I think I wipe out. I remember it was very difficult.

**SS:** Curtis Harrington said that Adelle's murder had to be toned down considerably in the editing.

**SW:** It shocked me when it came on the screen, how they had tied her up on the ladder. See, you're in a movie and you don't know really what the director plans unless he tells you. In the

**THE KING OF THE GYPSIES** (1978) had a lot of blue-eyed actors playing black-eyed gypsies. Among those pictured: Brooke Shields, Eric Roberts, Judd Hirsch, Susan Sarandon, and Shelley Winters.



picture that I just did—you know, the *PSYCHO* thing—I stab my son, and I didn't know it 'til I saw a dummy in the bed! This director who did it, he spoke Italian, and I never knew! I'm talking to an animal, and then I'm talking to my son, and then I'm talking to somebody who sold my house, and he read all the lines. He wouldn't let me have the actors there. I never knew who I was talking to, and it bothered me.

**SS:** You mentioned Willa Harper in *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER*.

**SW:** Who's Willa Harper?

**SS:** The character you played in *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER*. Unlike Helen Hill, Willa actually had a healthy sexuality that was repressed by the preacher.

**SW:** I think she was repressed. I expressed it in the scene where I'm looking in the mirror and Mitchum tells me that, you know, we're not gonna feed the demon sex, or whatever. He says, "Do you want any more children?" Do you remember that scene?

**SS:** Yes.

**SW:** Well, I thought that was a repressed woman. I thought I played a repressed woman. She couldn't answer back, and underneath she's terrified of him and can't articulate it.

**SS:** She turns increasingly to religion, much like Helen does.

**SW:** Yeah.

**SS:** Did you find any similarities between those characters?

**SW:** No. They were different. I don't think Helen was as helpless as Willa; I think Helen was stronger. Crazy! Psychotic! But she was sort of pushed over the edge by events.

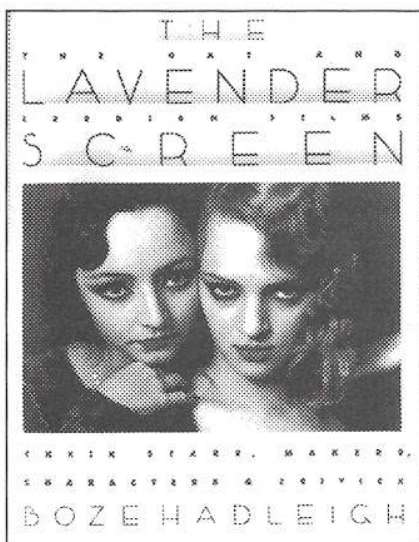
**SS:** What's your opinion of *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* Did you enjoy it?

**SW:** Yes. It was very—I don't like spooky pictures. I never watch them. I don't sleep. So I went to the premiere and I peeked at it. It was ahead of its time, but the audience and the critics couldn't accept me playing a lesbian, that there was a lesbian relationship between the two women. The critics certainly didn't deal with it; I don't think they even mentioned it.

**SS:** Your first big success came with George Cukor's *A DOUBLE LIFE*. You played the murder victim of an emotionally disturbed actor played by Ronald Colman.

**SW:** Oh, that's a wonderful movie! It's very sophisticated and interesting. You know, it's a disease that affects actors. Not in the movies—when you do a scene, it's over—but when you're playing a long run in a hit show, and eight times a week you're doing the character, sometimes the character can take over. And in that picture it does. That's a truly scary picture.



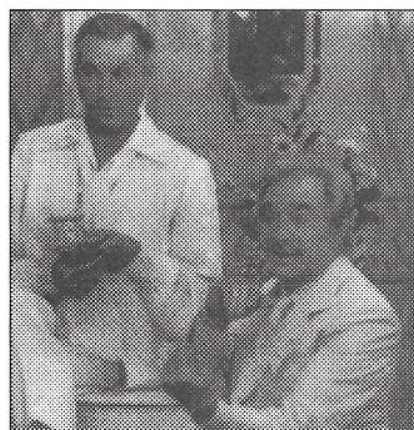


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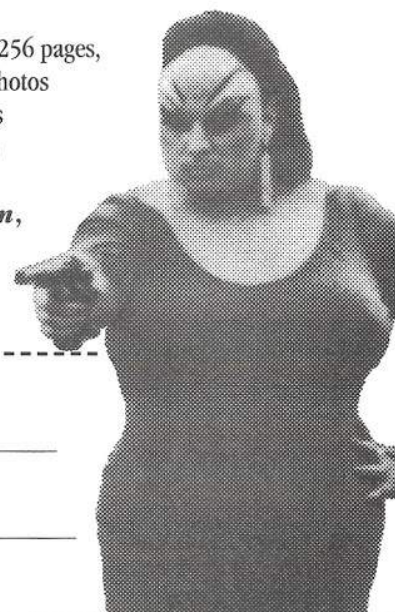
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As suburban matron Charlotte Haze, Shelley Winters only had eyes for James Mason (as Humbert Humbert), but Mason had his lecherous eyes on *LOLITA* (1962). Sue Lyon played the titular nymphet, and Winters died (again!) at half time.

**SS:** Was there a lot of competition for that part?

**SW:** Yes; 10 actresses, including Lana Turner and Kim Stanley, tested for it. I've forgotten who the other ones were. I was very lucky. I rehearsed it and then I barely made the test. I had a one-day part at MGM and I was hoping to get two, 'cause I needed the other \$100. I was going back to New York on the bus and giving up Hollywood to work in the theatre. Maybe it would've been better if I'd done that! (Laughs)

**SS:** Not for movie fans.

**SW:** I have done a lot of theatre. Summer stock, winter stock—I've done about three plays on Broadway and a couple Off-Broadway. But I haven't done as much on Broadway as I would have liked to have done.

**SS:** *A DOUBLE LIFE* was directed by George Cukor . . .

**SW:** A great director!

**SS:** Cukor has always been described as a woman's director.

**SW:** And he was—but he was wonderful with Ronald Colman. I think he got his reputation because women with him gave such great performances. I think that's one of the reasons he was fired from *GONE WITH THE WIND*. Clark Gable got paranoid and thought that he was throwing the picture to Vivien Leigh.

**SS:** When you first got to Hollywood, you were in such typical fare as *COVER GIRL* with Rita Hayworth and *A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS*.

**SW:** Running in and out of pictures! I think the first line I ever spoke was to Rosalind Russell; I said, "You can't go in there." I was the secretary. I don't even know what the picture was!

**SS:** So you had to fight to be noticed.

**SW:** Rita Hayworth was very nice to me. She was very sweet and she was always having me stand near her so I would get in the picture. She'd say, "Shelley, stand over here." A little out of focus, but you saw me! (Laughs)

**SS:** Right.

**SW:** The first thing I did was *TONIGHT AND EVERY NIGHT*. The Technicolor camera was huge! They had to put three strips of film in the camera—the primary colors. It took forever to load the camera, and it would take an hour to light everything.

**SS:** *A PLACE IN THE SUN* was another career milestone for you.

**SW:** I tested for that, too. That was a great experience and a great director: George Stevens. We made three films: *A PLACE IN THE SUN*, *THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK*, and *THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD*.

**SS:** You had to test for *A PLACE IN THE SUN*?

**SW:** Yeah. Norman Mailer coached me. I always thought that he was Theodore Dreiser's son—spiritually, anyway. Politically, he understood American tragedy almost better than anybody. And he explained my function in the film. You know, directors don't respect actors' intellects. The choices you make fulfill what the writer wants as written. When you have a good director, they help you. I teach often now; I teach that first you must connect very much to what the writer wants the audience to see. Whether it's "crime doesn't pay" or "boy meets girl" or "love conquers all"—whatever the theme of a film.

**SS:** Charles Laughton was a first-time film director on *THE NIGHT OF THE HUNTER*. Did he rely on the cinematographer, Stanley Cortez, for help with the film's technical aspects?

**SW:** And how! The lighting in that picture was fantastic!

**SS:** Did Cortez have a clear concept of how he wanted the film to look?

**SW:** Absolutely, absolutely! I did another picture with him, a picture with John Garfield called *HE RAN ALL THE WAY*. It was the first one where a family is taken hostage by a criminal. And Stanley Cortez focused on a tele-

*Continued on page 100*



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# ABBOTT AND COSTELLO

## MEET SCARLET STREET

BUD ABBOTT, JR., AND CHRIS COSTELLO  
SHARE SOME MEMORIES OF THE MEN WHO MET THE MONSTERS  
BY RICHARD SCRIVANI

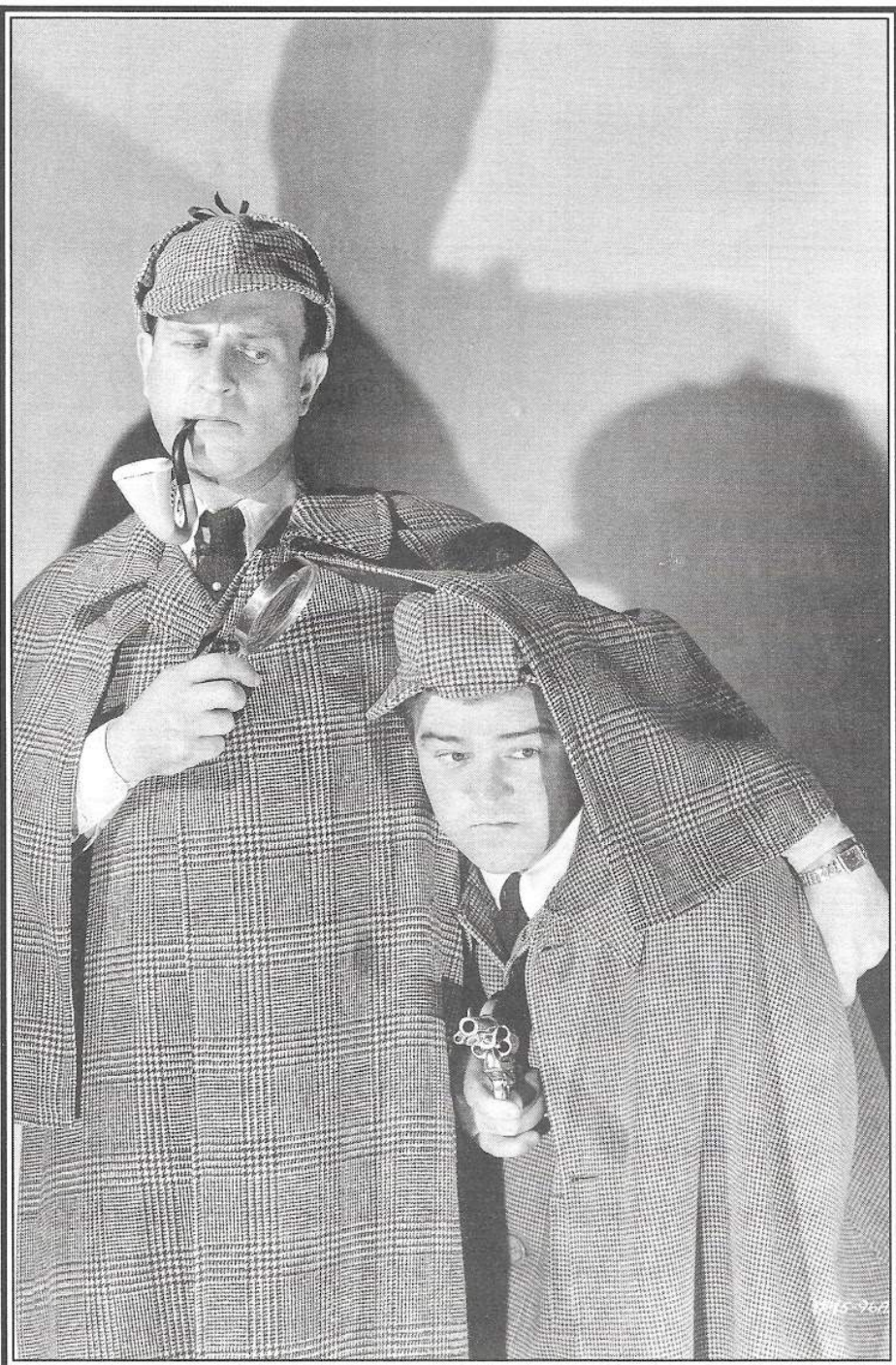


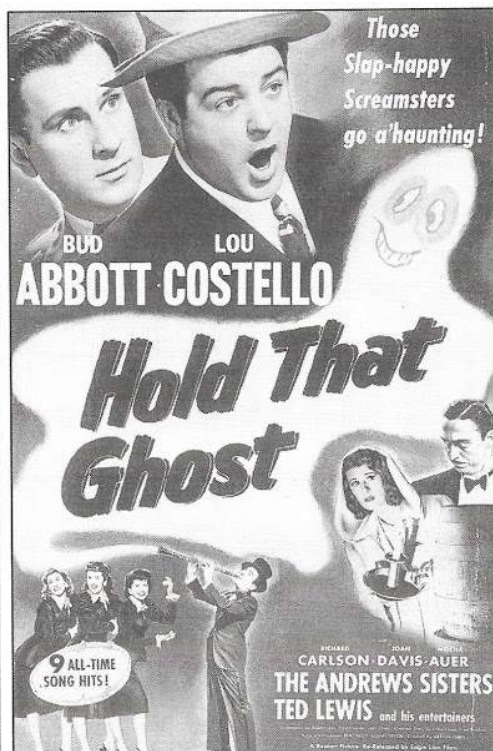
Photo courtesy of Richard Bojarski

A spooky hotel, covered in cobwebs and filled with "ghosts." A killer loose in a dark, shadowy radio station. A Revolutionary War mansion haunted by two trapped and misunderstood spirits from its past. A Gothic castle inhabited by Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster, and the Wolf Man. The list goes on and on, as does the legacy of the comedy team that gave us these images and the most hilarious run-ins ever with spooks, murderers, and monsters. From their first encounter with the "supernatural" in 1941's *HOLD THAT GHOST*, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello's career at Universal took them across the dusty threshold of menace and mystery in such comic romps as *WHO DONE IT?* (1942); *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES* (1946); *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* (1948); and *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE KILLER, BORIS KARLOFF* (1949)—not to mention the films in which they met up with every monster the studio could muster. The stars they appeared opposite would fill a *Who's Who of Golden Age Mystery and Horror*: Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney, Jr., Lionel Atwill, Glenn Strange, Patric Knowles, Evelyn Ankers, Gale Sondergaard—they met them all.

Now meet Bud Abbott, Jr., and Chris Costello, the lucky offspring of Bud and Lou, as they tell *Scarlet Street* what it was like growing up during the years these films were being made. Chris and Bud find keeping their parents' work alive a labor of love, and ran, until its dissolution last year, Abbott and Costello Enterprises (a project formed in the early 80s, whose purpose was to discourage the piracy of A&C-related merchandising by handling official products themselves). They are also avid promoters of and participants in the Abbott and Costello Fan Club. At present they are preparing for the first gala Abbott and Costello convention, to be held at the Ramada Hotel in Clifton, New Jersey, from August 20 through August 22, 1993.

Chris and Bud, you have the floor . . .





Lou Costello prepares to board "the twain on twack twee" under the watchful eyes of Bud Abbott and Joan Davis in the classic *HOLD THAT GHOST* (1941), one of four films made by the comedy team in their first year of stardom.

**Scarlet Street:** Why do you think that there has never been any "cult" for Abbott and Costello as there has been for the Three Stooges?

**Chris Costello:** Well, the Stooges did over 160 shorts, which were running from the 40s into the 50s. The people who grew up with the Stooges are now running networks or, you know, they're in business for themselves. They're the ones who are keeping the flame burning. Unfortunately with Abbott and Costello, aside from the Colgate Shows and their television show, which only ran two seasons, they weren't as visible for as long a stretch as Laurel and Hardy or the Three Stooges.

**SS:** How did Bud and Lou feel about working at Universal from the early days up to the late 40s and early 50s?

**CC:** You want to take it, Bud?

**Bud Abbott, Jr.:** Well, in the beginning, in 1941, when *BUCK PRIVATES* launched them . . .

**CC:** Actually, it was *ONE NIGHT IN THE TROPICS*.

**BA:** Yeah, but *BUCK PRIVATES* was the one that took off; it saved Universal at that time. Universal was going down; they were going under. Abbott and Costello pulled them out. I think they were very happy in the beginning, because Universal was liberal with them; they brought all their burlesque routines in, and Universal more or less worked around them, rather than having them work around the script. You can see that the early films, maybe

up to 1948, were their best. But then, near the end, Universal stopped putting money into Abbott and Costello . . .

**CC:** There was a new regime.

**BA:** You know, when they change executives like that, there's a different outlook on what they've got.

**CC:** Two guys from MGM—Leo Spitz and Bill Goetz—went to Universal to take it over, and it became Universal-International. They were trying to upgrade Universal from a "B" studio to sort of a class studio like MGM. They were trying to do away with the Ma and Pa Kettles, and Francis the Talking Mule, and certainly Abbott and Costello, so the quality of the scripts really declined; it was like they were just throwing them scripts to fulfill the contract.

**SS:** Did you ever visit the sets?

**BA:** I went quite a few times—on a weekend or if a film was being shot during Easter vacation or something like that; I'd go a couple of times. Probably the one that I distinctly remember because I got so frightened was *COMIN' ROUND THE MOUNTAIN*. You know, when you're there as a kid it's fun for the first few hours, and pretty soon you get a little bored and you're walking around the set or the lot trying to figure out what to do next. I remember I had this squirt gun and there was one of those big lamps on the set. I'd never seen a bulb so big in my life; it was like a gigantic light bulb. I'd squirt it with the squirt gun and it would sizzle! I thought that was really cool.

I was bored, and they were shooting maybe 50 feet away from me. I was shooting this bulb and they started to take a shot—you know, "Quiet! Quiet on the set! Action!"—and they shot maybe about four or five takes. Well, I was far enough back that they couldn't hear the sizzle—but, by God, that thing blew up right in the middle of the scene and it was the loudest bang you ever heard! I mean, there were people screaming obscenities, and the director's saying, "Who the hell . . ." and I took out the back door of the set and I went down into the public restrooms on the lot and hid. I hid for about half an hour; I was so scared to death. Anyway, I finally got brave enough to go back, and nobody said a word to me, and I knew damn well they knew it was me. And I thought, "Oh, I can't believe they're letting me get away with this," and Dad looks at me and says, "Come here for a minute." I walked over—and he was so cool, you know? He didn't get upset; he just said, "You know, that can be dangerous; you shouldn't be doing stuff like that." That was all! But the rest of the day I was embarrassed, because I knew they knew I did it. And then I got locked in the spaceship . . .

**SS:** On *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO GO TO MARS*?

**BA:** Actually, they were done with the spaceship, and I had a friend with me; my dad let me bring a friend. In those days you could walk around the lots and they knew who you were; it wasn't





*The Abbott and Costello families on the set of 1950's ABBOTT & COSTELLO IN THE FOREIGN LEGION. Standing Left to Right: Bud Abbott, wife Betty, Lou's wife Anne, daughter Paddy, and Lou Costello. Kneeling Left to Right: Lou's daughters Carole and Chris, Bud's daughter Vickie, and son Bud, Jr.*

like today where they've got this tight security. The spaceship was stored in a bin back away from the main street. So we got up in there and started playing around; there was a little ladder and you climbed up through the center. If you remember the hatch—well, that was a real hatch! I mean, it wasn't metal, but it was solid. When that hatch closed down, there was no handle; there was no way from the top to pull it up! So here we are in this capsule, and people are walking maybe 20 feet away from us, and we're banging and banging—but they can't hear us. We're in this little cubicle with these little windows and we're banging and really getting panicky, and I say, "They'll never find us! We'll be here for a week!" Thank God, man, someone walked in and found us. We were in there for about an hour!

CC: Oh, my God!

BA: I always used to get into trouble. Not intending to, you know? I haven't

been on too many sets lately, but in those days when they made a set—like a space capsule, for example—they put more into it than they do today. I used to love to go to the studio. I loved it!

SS: Did either of your dads ever tell you about making *HOLD THAT GHOST*?

BA: *HOLD THAT GHOST*? I was on the set. I was pretty young . . .

SS: Lou and Joan Davis worked particularly well together in that film. Did they remain friends?

CC: I think they did. I know that Dad had a tremendous respect for her and her comedy.

SS: How about *WHO DONE IT*?

BA: That's one of my favorites. That was really all them; there was nothing else involved.

SS: No musical numbers. How did your fathers get along with their directors?

CC: A few directors really were tuned into their comedy and working with them. Charlie Barton was one of them;

I think he really understood their comedy. I think he was the one who actually initiated the three-camera shot. There was one on them as a team, one on Bud, and one on Lou—'cause the spontaneity was just so fast, you couldn't do a cut and retake. I think they had a wonderful relationship with Charlie Barton because he really gave them free reign to do their comedy. I think they respected all the directors; I don't think there was ever really a problem.

SS: Arthur Lubin directed some of their best films.

CC: It's funny: When I first interviewed Arthur Lubin, he told me that, when Bud and Lou signed their contract for Universal, he didn't know who they were. They said that he was going to be directing an Abbott and Costello film, and he said, "Abbott? You mean like the Abbott Dancers?" They were a

*Continued on page 76*



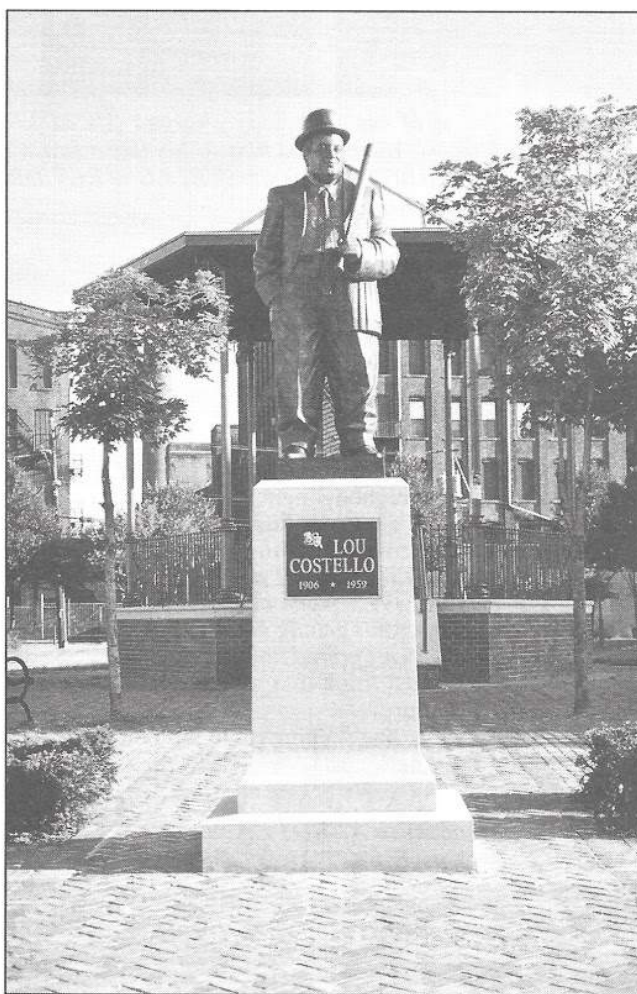
# PATERSON REMEMBERS LOU COSTELLO

Lou Costello's memory is alive and well in the town of Paterson, New Jersey. For anyone familiar with the beloved comic, Paterson is practically synonymous with his name. Lou rarely let an opportunity pass to mention his home town—whether on radio, in films, or on TV. Well, on June 26, 1992, Paterson returned the favor—with interest! In Federici Park on Cianci Street, the Lou Costello Memorial was unveiled, its *pièce de resistance* a life-sized bronze statue of Lou himself. The 5'-10" image of Costello, which stands atop a 6' Vermont granite pedestal, has been rendered wearing an outfit that recalls his burlesque and TV careers. The statue, created and sculpted by Dierdre Zahajkewycz of Professional Prototypes and cast by Joel Meisner Studios, cost \$100,000 to realize, the whopping sum raised in a short six months through private donations by the Greater Paterson Lou Costello Memorial Committee, headed by Sam Cannella. The granite pedestal was the work of Dan Contegiacomo, the project itself conceived by Lou Duva, well-known fight promoter and manager of former world heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield. Some time ago, Paterson's Mayor William J. Pascrell, Jr., had set the stage for the tribute by declaring Wednesday, March 6, 1991 (Lou's 85th birthday) "Lou Costello Day" and by renaming its First Avenue "Who's on First Avenue."

Present at the unveiling were Christine and Paddy, Lou's daughters; Father Julius Licata, friend of the family and Abbott and Costello Fan Club chaplain; and members of the Memorial Committee. The dedication was a dream come true for fans of the great comic, especially so for Lou's youngest daughter, Chris. Charming, energetic, and extremely devoted to her father's memory, Chris reflected on the special day:

"The Lou Costello statue was the brainchild of Lou Duva, the Boston promoter for Holyfield. Lou grew up in Paterson,

and he remembered that. He said that Dad was always giving back to Paterson and it was something he wanted to do to give back to Lou. He started the Lou Costello Statue Memorial, I believe, and it was dedicated on June 26th of last year.



*"Are those pigeons divin' offa me?" Lou Costello has been immortalized in bronze in his beloved hometown of Paterson, New Jersey.*

Everybody came out, and it was one of the most thrilling moments I've ever witnessed. I had taken my niece Kristin; it was her first time in Paterson, and she could not believe the love pouring out for her grandfather. There must have been over a thousand people in this small Federici Square. They had draped the statue, and you should have heard the emotion in the crowd when that tarp came down from it! It's beautiful! There was a lot of love and time put into that statue. It was probably the most emotional moment I've had in a long time, mainly because Paterson never really forgot him, nor did he forget Paterson. Paterson was always incorporated somewhere in his films. If you notice, in *THE NAUGHTY NINETIES*, the film where they do the "Who's on First," the backdrop has the "Paterson Wolves" on it. The people were hanging out of windows! Women were coming up with photos taken of Dad in the 50s when he would visit Paterson. He was so tied in to children; I mean, he used to go back and throw the first ball for the midget-league games. He was always opening one of the films at the Fabian Theater in Paterson. Bud was also a part of that, you

know, which not too many people know. Bud always went to Paterson with Dad and helped support a lot of charity events, so we're trying to get Bud alongside Dad. Whether it's another statue or a street name, we're hoping that's down the road. My sister Paddy was taken to see the statue. She had not been back since her teen years, and I could tell that she was filled with emotion. Paddy just looked at me and she shook her head and said, "I just feel as though he's going to walk off that pedestal."

—Richard Scrivani





Photos this page © 1953 Universal Pictures Company

**LEFT:** *The Monster* (Glenn Strange) got the scare of his electricity-charged life in 1948's *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* when *Dracula* (Bela Lugosi) introduced him to his latest brain donor. **RIGHT:** Under the mask is Eddie Parker doubling for Boris Karloff in 1953's *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*. Under the derby is Bud Abbott, one of comedy's greatest straight men.

*Continued from page 74*

big dance troupe back then, and he kept thinking he was gonna be directing the Abbott Dancers in a film.

**BA:** In a film named *COSTELLO*, right?

**SS:** *Abbott in COSTELLO*?

**BA:** Yeah, right! (Laughs)

**SS:** *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES* is not a typical *Abbott and Costello* comedy.

**CC:** It's the first film where they're not paired as a team.

**BA:** That was one of their finest films, simply because they weren't teamed. Dad had a chance to act and do comedy for a change. He wasn't limited to playing the straight man, and I think it was great. The only other movie that's similar would be *LITTLE GIANT*, where they're not in the script as a team.

**CC:** That's one of my favorite films.

**BA:** *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES* was so well done, I think. The thing that a lot of people don't know about Dad is that he was a comedian; I mean, he was a prankster from the time he got up till the time he went to bed! He loved comedy; he loved pulling pranks on people. He used to do it to me all the time, and everybody in the family. Sometimes you'd get so goddang angry you wanted to throw something at him!

**SS:** Were *LITTLE GIANT* and *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES* made during a period when they weren't getting along? Was that why they weren't paired up?

**CC:** No, I just think that was part of the script structure.

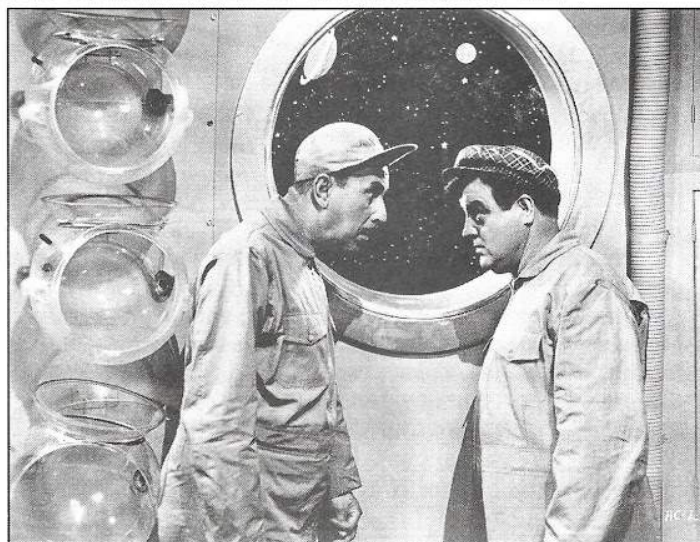
**BA:** No, that had nothing to do with anything like that.

**CC:** The supposed fights, the rest—I think it's been exaggerated and blown up all out of proportion by the press, but to say that they never had an argument or a fight is ludicrous! You just cannot be together for that length of time and not have an occasional problem, hassle, difference of opinion. I mean, they were human beings first and then the team of Abbott and Costello. I think this is probably naivete on the part of a lot of fans: They think that, because they were a team, they should never have fought. If they did, it hit the press like it was a major thing!

**SS:** Do you think they found *THE TIME OF THEIR LIVES* an enjoyable departure from routine?

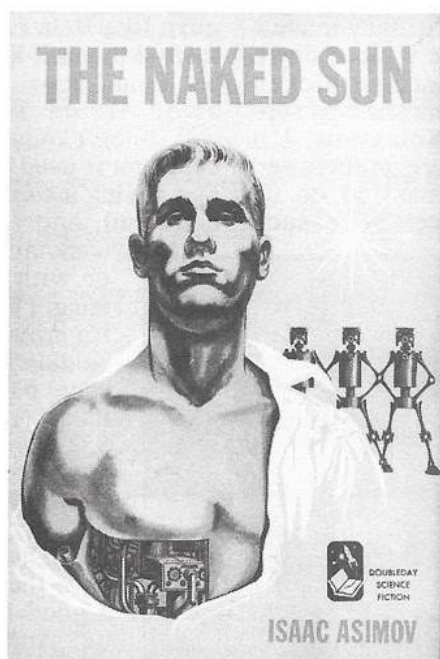
**BA:** I know they enjoyed making it. I think, for both of them, it was a chance

**LEFT:** Bud Abbott smells a rat (anyway, a big mouse) in *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE* (1953). **RIGHT:** Bud and Lou went to Venus in 1953's *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO GO TO MARS*. Go figure . . .





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to spread their wings a little bit, to do something without having the other one on top of you all the time. Working off other comedians and actors for a change, too. But as far as the script being written that way because they were fighting, that's outrageous. I can't believe anybody would think that.

**SS:** About *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN*—is it true that Lou did not care for the script when he first read it?

**CC:** I got this from Charlie Barton. He said that Lou looked at the script and felt that Universal had no use for Abbott and Costello anymore, because they were pairing them with all the Universal monsters. His comment to the production office was that a three-year-old could write a better script! He never felt the film would do that well; in fact, I think he would have died if he were here today, to see that the film has become a classic cult film. The story I got from Charles Barton was that, at the premiere in Hollywood, his mother made a point of going up to Robert Arthur [the producer] and congratulating him, saying it was one of the best Abbott and Costello films she had ever seen. And Dad got so pissed off, he wouldn't talk to her for a week!

**BA:** At the opposite end, the monsters—Boris Karloff, for instance—didn't want to work with comedians.

**SS:** Did they have any stories about *FRANKENSTEIN*?

**BA:** I was there a few times. Dad loved that film, you know; he used to come home and tell Vickie [Bud's sister] and me about all the monsters. We were dying to go; in those days monster films were the big thing. Bela Lugosi was incredible. I mean, I was pretty young, but I do remember. They would cut, you know, and Glenn Strange would walk off and talk to people, and do this and that—but picture Bela Lugosi eating a doughnut and drinking a cup of coffee, but still being in character! I mean, that was what the man really was! He never changed! It was a little spooky, let me tell you!

**SS:** They'd worked with Lon Chaney, Jr., before, in *HERE COME THE COEDS*.

**CC:** Everybody I talked to said that Lon Chaney, Jr., was an absolute sweetheart. It's funny; Betty Abbott—who was Bud's niece and the script girl on that film—she told a story about when they were on the back lot. There were

some people on the set that day, and I guess the crowd was so thick that they couldn't get her through. Glenn Strange, in his *Frankenstein* outfit, literally picked her up and walked through the crowd with her.

**BA:** You know how big he was . . .

**CC:** With the big platform shoes!

**BA:** Everybody just split; they made a big path for him and he walked down there in the Monster suit and picked her up and took her where she was supposed to go! (Laughs) You know, I'll tell you something. I've mentioned this many times. One thing I do, do, do remember: I have never seen such

**SS:** Did your dads ever mention working with Boris Karloff in *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET THE KILLER* or in *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*?

**CC:** Oh, I have no idea.

**BA:** I never heard much about Karloff. I'll tell you something: Some of these guys like Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff—I mean, I know they're normal, but Bela Lugosi I just couldn't understand. He was so strange; he really was. I don't know how to explain it, except that it used to crack me up to see him having a cup of coffee and eating a doughnut, and then someone would

walk up to him and he'd come on with the accent and everything. I was looking for his coffin around the lot; I thought he didn't come from home, he came out of a coffin or something! (Laughs)

**SS:** How did your fathers feel about making that series of "*ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET . . .*" movies?

**BA:** Dad and Lou just didn't have the foresight to see what a good movie it was gonna be. And with the success of *FRANKENSTEIN*, the studio figured, "Well, now we'll do the Mummy; we'll do the Invisible Man"—in the end they were searching for new monsters to use.

**SS:** They could have used the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

**BA:** They probably would've. With *FRANKENSTEIN*, they had reached their pinnacle and I think they realized it. Their popularity was coming down a bit; the scripts weren't as good. Universal was not putting the money they used to put into their films.

**SS:** Bud? Do you have a book in you about your father?

**BA:** I've been procrastinating for years and years. I'd like to do a book on what Dad was like at home—just as a father, not entailing the theatrical

history and business deals and all that, but just how he was as a father, 'cause he was great. He was really great.

**SS:** In closing, how would you sum up the professional and private men who were Bud Abbott and Lou Costello?

**CC:** My sister really came up with the most beautiful saying, which is, "You can't be together for 22 years and not have an argument—but at the same time, you can't be together for that length of time and not be friends."

**For information about the Abbott and Costello Convention, see page 31.**



*Chris Costello, Kristen Cristello (Carole Costello's daughter), and Bud Abbott, Jr. pose with Ann Corio, the Queen of Burlesque (Seated). Photo courtesy of Chris Costello.*

makeup! I mean, we see it in grays and black and white, but I used to sit there on the set and think, "Why isn't this in color?" I really think they lost something; the castles and the sets were just gorgeous! And, of course, the *Frankenstein* Monster and the Wolf Man and *Dracula*—the makeup was just incredible! Absolutely incredible! Just a shame; I could not understand why they didn't shoot the film in color.

**SS:** What about Glenn Strange? Was he a nice guy?

**BA:** He was a real sweetheart. Big guy. I stood up to his kneecaps at the time.



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TALES OF TERROR 1962 V. Price  
THE LOST WORLD 1960 C. Rains

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THE DEVIL COMMANDS '41 Karloff  
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THE BLACK CAT '41 Rathbone  
MAN-MADE MONSTER '41 Chaney  
NIGHT MONSTER '42 Lugosi  
HOUSE OF HORRORS '45 Hatton  
THE BRUTE MAN '46 Hatton  
SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK Hatton  
FACE OF MARBLE '44 Carradine  
INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE Carradine  
THE MUMMY'S CURSE '42 Chaney  
THE MUMMY'S TOMB '43 Chaney  
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CALLING DR. DEATH '43 Chaney  
STRANGE CONFESSION '45 Chaney  
THE MAD MONSTER '42 Zucco  
VOODOO MAN '44 Lugosi  
INVISIBLE WOMAN '44 Barrymore  
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MURDER IN THE BLUE ROOM A. Gwynne  
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ALLIGATOR PEOPLE Letterboxed 1959  
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BOYS FROM BROOKLYN '53 Lugosi  
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ASTOUNDING SHE-MONSTER 1957  
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# Our Man on Baker Street

## Cover Story

Well, it's night time in Baker Street now—permanently! After the terrible gales of February, which made such a mess of Granada's Baker Street set (which is part of the Studio Tour) the powers that be decided to build a canopy over the street to protect it in future from the elements. This canopy is opaque and represents a dark blue sky with twinkling stars, thus plunging the fabled thoroughfare into permanent night. With the aid of fog machines, visitors on the tour can really thrill to the artificial mysterious atmosphere, but these changes now make it almost impossible to film any daytime scenes on the street. It seems like another nail in Sherlock's coffin at Granada—but more of Granada later.

## Lost in the Marsh Land

Imagine the scene: A television executive boardroom. A group of harassed



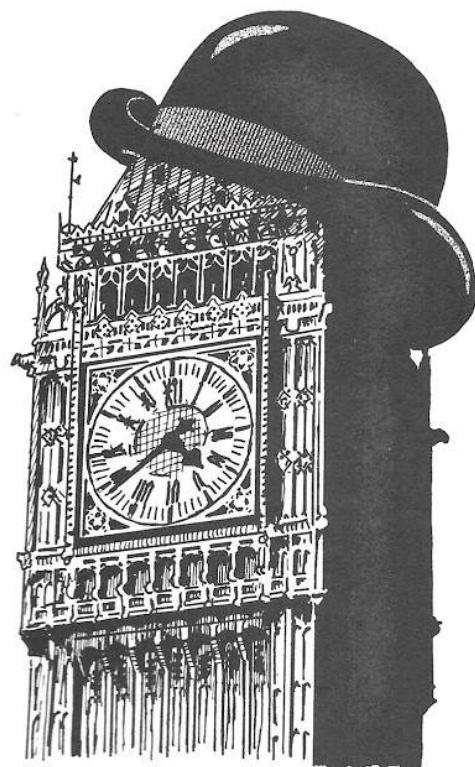
Patrick Malahide as Inspector Alleyn

executives ponder future productions. Since *INSPECTOR MORSE* finished, there has been a desperate search for his replacement—a ratings-grabbing detective. Great Scot, nearly all the decades are taken: *SHERLOCK HOLMES* covers the Victorian and early Edwardian period; *LORD PETER WIMSEY* is set in the 20s, *POIROT* in the 30s, *MISS MARPLE* in the 50s. Some genius suggests the 40s. There are cheers all round, and someone grabs a Ngaio Marsh novel off the shelf. It features an aristocratic Scotland Yard Inspector, a fellow called Alleyn. Some other fellow suggests that a series is made and set in the 40s. Drinks all round!

Indeed, in April, the BBC began to show their Alleyn series—five 90-minute dramas based on the Marsh novels. I watched the first one, *A MAN LAY DEAD*. It had all the expected ingredients: beautiful British countryside; excellent sense of period with all the appropriate clothes, vehicles, and hairstyles; lovely old manor houses and aristocratic lords looking furtive; the tinkling of teacups and the cries of maids finding dead bodies. It was exquisitely done—and very boring. Blatantly advertised as a *MORSE* substitute, this had as much similarity to that excellent series as *DYNASTY* has to *TWIN PEAKS*! Where was the tension, the suspense, the cunning interplay between characters, the mystery? I suspect they were all out on the lawn having afternoon tea. It may improve, I suppose, but on this showing it is doomed to be laid out in a library with a sheet pulled over it.

## Birthday Greetings

Peter Cushing was 80 in May this year—can you believe it? The Gentle Man of Horror has brought great enjoyment to a vast number of



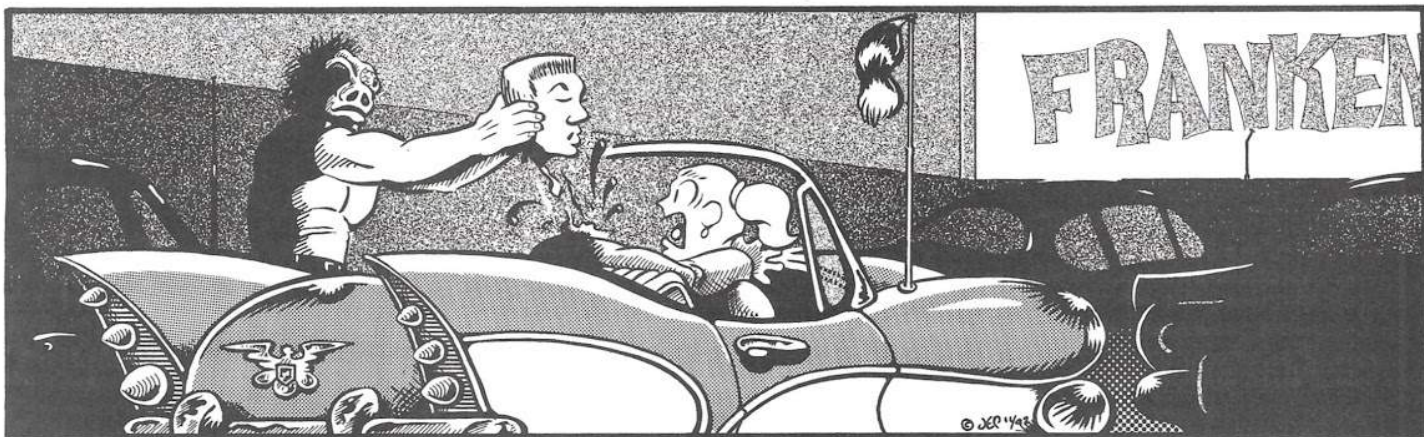
genre fans over his distinguished career. His Holmes, Baron Frankenstein, and Van Helsing (stake your heart out, Sir Antony) are classic creations which will live as long as there are movies. And he's such a nice fellow, too! Happy Birthday, dear Peter.

## Not Dead Yet

Were *THE LAST VAMPYRE* and *THE ELIGIBLE BACHELOR* the final Jeremy Brett/Edward Hardwicke Sherlock Holmes films? The latest news from Granada is that British station ITV, which had insisted upon the most recent episodes being made in the two-hour format, have switched horses and decided that the one-hour format is preferable. Among other things, this means that at least one of the scripts written well over a year ago—Jeremy Paul's *THE RED CIRCLE* (sadly minus the character of Inspector Lestrade)—is in preproduction, awaiting only the final go-ahead from ITV. Other stories in the planning stages are *The Golden Pince-Nez* (the latter scripted by Gary Hopkins and directed by mirror-master Peter Hammond) and *The Three Gables* (script by Jeremy Paul), and a combination of *The Three Garridebs* and *The Mazarin Stone* (with a new Billy, perhaps?) in a single episode. Granada hopes to have a total of six new episodes for spring, 1994.

—David Stuart Davies





Shock Drive-In Presents

# TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE

Article and Interviews  
by Jessie Lilley and Richard Valley

*I shall make the Earth my home, and I shall never, never leave it.*

—David Love in TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE

*The film indeed has almost nothing to recommend it. It is silly, ponderous and trite, but occasionally there are glimmerings of an intelligence real enough that I'm still curious as to why Tom Graeff seems never to have made another film.*

—Bill Warren, *Keep Watching the Skies!*

If there's a broken heart for every light on Broadway, how many must there be for every kleig light in Hollywood? The movie capital was and is the Land of Dreams, a sometimes magical, sometimes seedy carnival where anyone can become a "shimmering, glowing star in the cinema firma-mint." From the early, silent days of motion pictures to the present era of Surround Sound blockbusters, young hopefuls have descended on Tinseltown with one object in mind: to make it big in the movies. Some succeed. Others never get very far at all, becoming instead the sort of Filmland flotsam inhabiting Nathanael West's novel *The Day of the Locust*, nameless ciphers working as salesmen, secretaries, hookers, hustlers . . .

Then there are the driven few who, while never quite climbing the ladder of cinematic success, still hold fast to their dreams—if only on the bottom rung: Actors such as Arch Hall, Jr., star of *EEGAH!* (1962). Directors such as Edward D. Wood, Jr., the cross-dressing mastermind behind *GLEN OR GLENDA?* (1953), *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* (1955), and *PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE* (1959). The movies they made may have been trash, but how many budding filmmakers succeed in making anything at all? These Grade-Z moguls made movies without studio facilities. They made movies without adequate budgets. Many of them made movies without talent, but make them they did. They did it because they had to act, had to write, had to direct. They did it for Love.

Which brings us to Tom Graeff, known to dozens as writer, director, editor, and star—under the name David Love—of 1959's *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*.

Or does it?

\*\*\*

"I knew Tom Graeff in 1957," remembers Ursula Pearson, "when he was making *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*—which my husband, Bryan, and I financed. We also appeared in the film. I played Professor Simpson's secretary, Hilda, and Bryan played—dear God, it was so awful—Thor. You know, the heavy? The one with the ray gun?"

Acting under the name Bryan Grant, Bryan Geoffrey Pearson played a foul-tempered alien adolescent eager to zap the film's hero into cosmic dust. Thor's weapon of choice is the aforementioned ray gun, or "focusing disintegrator ray," in reality a five-and-dime cap pistol. (Sharp-eyed moviegoers can spot the words "Buck Rogers" on the otherworldly firearm.) Ursula Pearson chose the surname Hansen for the small role of the secretary, deciding that her maiden name, Gadischke, was impossible for American audiences to decipher.

Like the Pearsons, Tom Graeff appeared in his galaxy-spanning epic under a pseudonym—but not as David Love, the film's clean-cut lead.

"Tom Graeff plays the reporter," Ursula Pearson recalls. "David Love is the boy who falls in love with the girl, Dawn Anderson. He came from a nice, upper-middle-class family, Tom did. They lived in Costa Mesa, near Newport."

Thomas Lockyear Graeff, who played Joe Rogers in *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* under the name Tom Lockyear, graduated from UCLA in 1952 with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts. Seeking to unravel one of the lesser (though intriguing) mysteries of film scholarship—namely, who Graeff was and how he managed not only to make his minor cult classic, but to get it released by Warner Bros.—*Scarlet Street* tracked down Ursula Pearson, now owner of Incentive Tours America in West Los Angeles and long divorced from husband Bryan. Our first question, in which



we sought to confirm that David Love was in reality Tom Graeff, produced a surprising response:

"Oh, no! Definitely not. Tom Graeff was closely associated in his personal life with David Love, who plays the leading role in *TEENAGERS*. We were all friends. The four of us spent many, many evenings together socially—in their apartment, you know, or they came over to our home. We were quite, quite friendly—until."

Ignoring for the moment the ominous note struck by the word "until," we pressed for further info on the auteur of the film *TV Guide* (in the June 12, 1993, issue) dubbed one of five "Movies So Bad They're Funny."

"Well, David Love was the intimate friend of Tom Graeff. They lived together. I mean, we all knew that Tom and David were both homosexuals. We still were very well acquainted with them, and spent quite a lot of time together. David was the prodigy of Tom. He had very little to give in experience in acting or anything; he was a childlike character. Tom gave him this opportunity to become something, hoping, I'm sure, for stardom. That's why Tom made the picture with David in the lead. Every actor hopes for stardom, and David Love hoped for that."

Having rewritten the text books to that extent, *Scarlet Street* asked Ursula Pearson if she knew the current whereabouts of either Graeff or Love.

"Well, my daughter was tracing the film—not Tom Graeff, but the film—for about two years. She reached, I think, one of the studios that had possession of the film at one time, and was told that Tom Graeff had passed away. [This information was verified by the UCLA Alumni Association.] *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*, therefore, was part of his estate, and only principals of the film could claim a copy. One of them told her that Tom had died. I have no idea what became of David Love."

\*\*\*

"It's an odd picture," says Bill Warren of *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*. "It has certain virtues which, at the time I first saw it, were not readily discernible."

Warren knows quite a lot about odd pictures; as author of the two-volume *Keep Watching the Skies!* (McFarland, 1986), a history of sci-fi films produced in the 50s and early 60s, he's covered many of them.

"It's so easy to scoff at cheap, low-budget pictures," he continues. "There are really two types: There are the ones like Ed Wood's pictures or *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER*

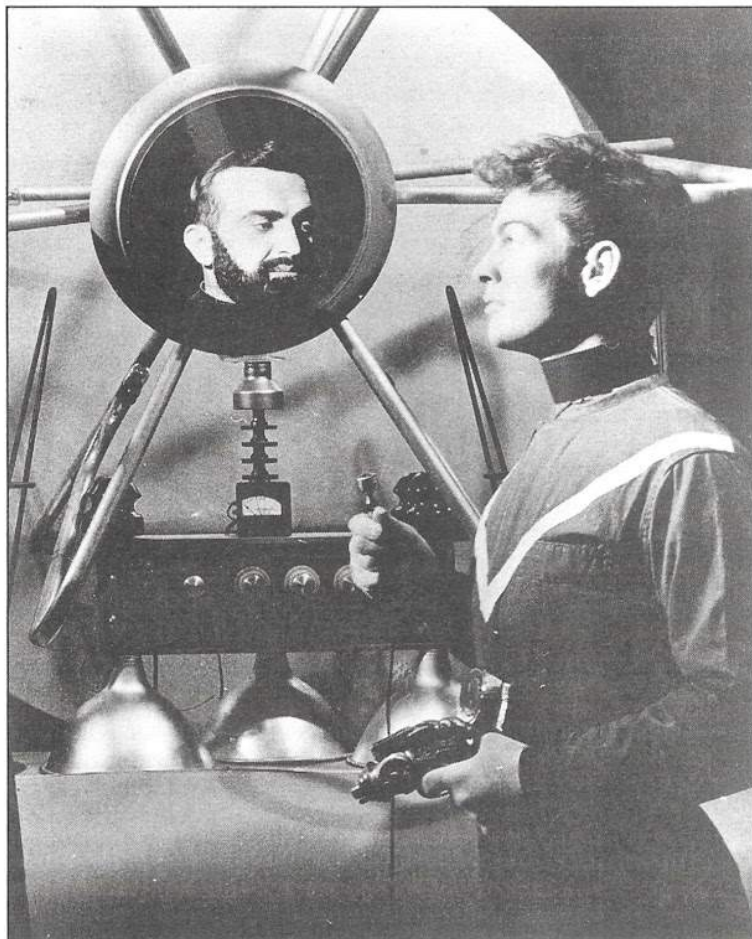
*SPACE*, made by people who really are trying to make a good movie, and then there are the cheap, shoddy things made by rip-off artists. *TEENAGERS* is interesting, because there's clearly a mind at work. Graeff has something in mind; it doesn't necessarily come across on the screen, but you can see that it's not just another cheap picture."

Admittedly, good intentions don't count for much when filmgoers fork over hard cash, only to see something on the level of *PLAN 9* or *TEENAGERS*, but there's something to be said for Warren's argument. Certainly, Graeff's film is

odd; for veterans of the Saturday Matinee wars of the Fabulous Fifties, its barely comprehensible plot, filtered through the rosy hue of nostalgia, is strangely endearing.

Following a short, risible prologue set in an observatory, *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* takes wing in a manner destined to bring joy to the hearts of Freudians: A bright, whirling, drill-shaped spacecraft approaches sunny California and screws itself into the ground. Emerging from the hatch (which remains above ground), the space-helmeted Thor (Bryan Grant) immediately fires his ray gun at a yapping dog, reducing it to a skeleton. (Not only are poor Sparky's bones wired together, his "dialogue" in his brief turn as a living cast member is dubbed by a human actor.)

Thor and his teen companions (Derek, Sol, and Moro), accompanied by the older, nameless Captain, have dropped by Earth to learn if the planet



*David Love as Derek, the Boy from Another World, gazes on the image of his father, the Leader (played by Gene Sterling).*

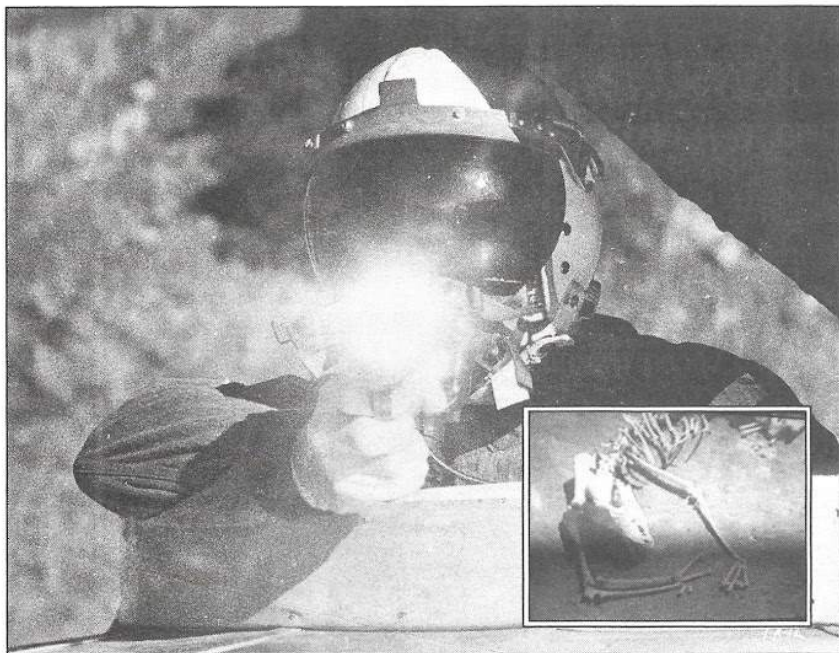
is a suitable breeding ground for the monstrous Gargons. (The monstrous Gargons are lobsters which, when exposed to Earth's atmosphere, grow to "millions of times their original size.") The specimen on hand, a rather woebegone thing, doesn't take very well to its new home:

*Captain:* What has happened?

*Moro:* I do not know. It suddenly fell limp, and now does not move.

Having again charmed the Freudians among us, *TEENAGERS* continues. The Gargon revives, proving that Earth is indeed serviceable as an alien stockyard, but Derek (David Love) will have none of it: Sparky's pitiful little skeleton and name tag have convinced him that the planet's civilization may well be worth saving. A fight ensues, Derek escapes with Thor in smug pursuit, and the Captain (Robert King Moody) is recalled to the aliens' home world





**The mighty Thor (Bryan Grant) takes deadly aim with his Buck Rogers ray gun, blasting poor Sparky (Insert) in TEENAGERS' opening moments.**

(just a hop, skip, and a jump) by the Leader (Gene Sterling), who happens to be Derek's father.

The soundtrack inundated with perky background music, the scene shifts to a cheery little sit-com town. The address on Sparky's tag brings Derek to the home of Gramps (BRIDE OF THE MONSTER's Harvey B. Dunn) and Betty Morgan (Dawn Anderson). There, Derek rents the room of Betty's absent brother, Bud. (Derek must have wandered onto the set of FATHER KNOWS BEST.) Betty invites the lodger to go swimming at a friend's house. Boyfriend Joe Rogers (Tom Lockyear) can't make it; he's a reporter, and skeletons

**No one will want to jump Alice's bones after Thor's had his way with her. Sonia Torgenson (where is she now) played TEENAGERS' little-town flirt.**



are starting to turn up all over the place. (It's Thor trying to smear Buck Rogers' reputation.)

A series of mini-chases and murders ensue, with Derek and Betty tooling around town and Thor, hot on their heels, blasting a motorist, a pump jockey, Betty's flirty friend Alice (Sonia Torgenson), and Professor Simpson. (Screaming at the sight of the prof's bones, Ursula Hansen, as Simpson's assistant, Hilda, lets fly with one of TEENAGERS' wittier opinions: "Oh, it's some kind of foolish joke! I'm not going to keep a job where this sort of thing goes on!") During a gun fight with the police (resulting in two more bags of bones), Thor is wounded. He forces Derek and Betty to come to his aid:

**Thor:** You will take me to a man of surgery to remove the metal pellets from my flesh.

Eventually, Thor tangles with Joe, is injured in a car crash, and winds up in the local hospital. Derek and Betty, meanwhile, battle the growing menace of the Gargon, which is now the size of an elephant, but looks more like a poorly-superimposed crustacean. The Boy from Another World (the film's original title) realizes that an invasion force from his planet will soon populate Earth with thousands of such creatures, and prepares to make the supreme sacrifice. He retrieves Thor from the hospital, meets his dad (who has made it from home base to Earth in a matter of hours) at the landing site, and directs the rapidly-approaching fleet of spaceships to crash—effectively screwing Thor, the Leader, and himself to death.

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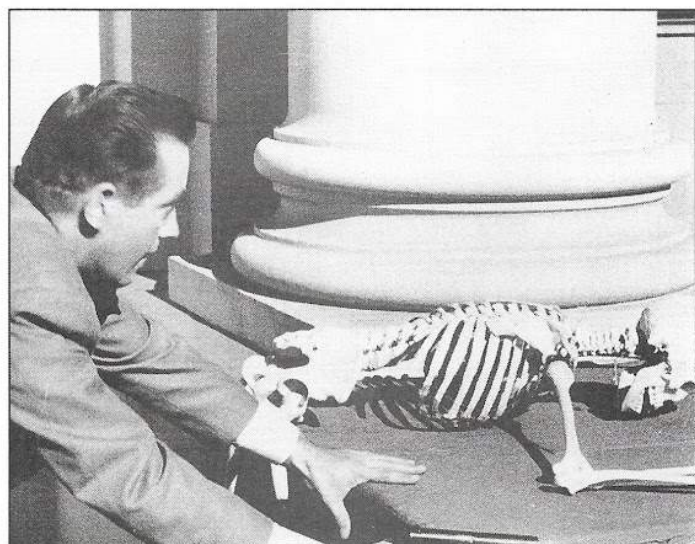
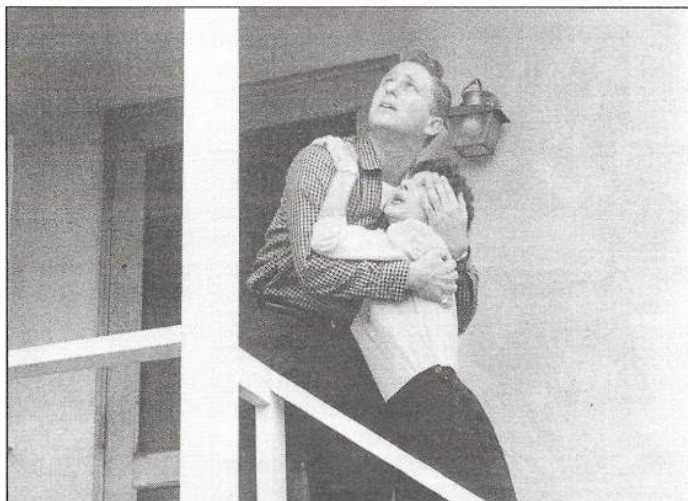
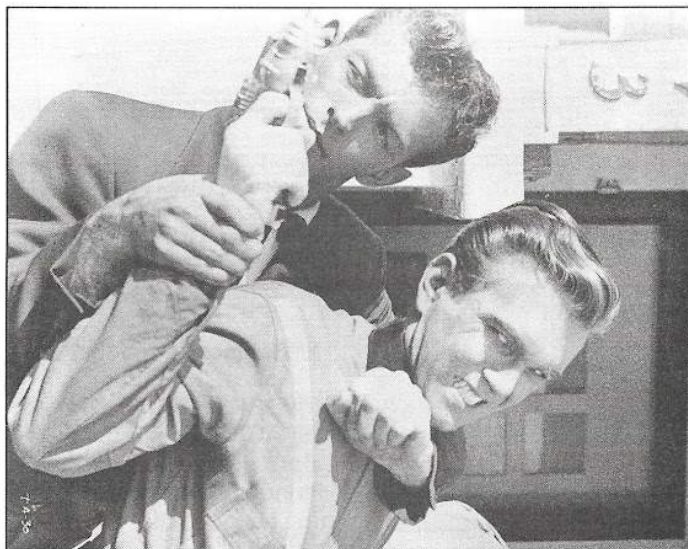
"It was quite brilliant for its time," remembers Bryan Pearson from his home in Hawaii. "Looking back on it today, of course, it's ridiculous, but the young man who produced and directed it had some very interesting ideas about how to inexpensively shoot exteriors. You know, with most exteriors, you have a lot of noise and you have to spend a lot of studio time dubbing and so forth. With most movies, the dubbing is put in after the action. This movie was done exactly in reverse; the sound was recorded first, and then the action had to match the sound. Believe me, that's not easy!"

Nor is it unprecedented. While Tom Graeff was prerecording dialogue for TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE, Orson Welles, whose background in radio made the technique a natural option, was doing much the same for sections of 1958's masterful TOUCH OF EVIL. (If nothing else, this proves that Graeff, while obviously no Welles, was not an average low-budget hack, either.)

"As you performed the action," continues Pearson, "you heard your voice coming through a little speaker on the side of the camera. You had to sync your mouth movements to your own voice. When I see it even today, I think it's really rather cleverly done."

The former actor, whose American credits include a role as Torin Thatcher's son in the CASE OF THE UNWELCOME BRIDE





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** A lobby card for *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* (1959), showing in vivid detail the lobster that played the otherworldly Gargon; David Love and Bryan Grant (as Derek and Thor) fighting over the Buck Rogers ray gun; two innocent bystanders frightened by news reports of the Gargon; David Love and Dawn Anderson sharing a romantic moment; two police officers (one out of uniform); and Dawn Anderson (as Earth-girl Betty Morgan) examining a ray-gun component.



**RICHARD T. FORBATH;**  
A.B.; Theatre Arts-Ra-  
dio; KX; Gold Key;  
Yeomen; NROTC; Rep-  
at-Large; SEC; YMCA;  
DAILY BRUIN 2, 3;  
Welfare Board; Home-  
coming.

**JOAN FOSS;** A.B.; Ad-  
vertising Art; Transfer:  
Stephens College, Co-  
lumbia, Missouri; AOII;  
Model Josie; Shell and  
Oar; DAILY BRUIN;  
OCB 2.

**ARDETH J. FREDERICK;**  
B.S.; Physical Educa-  
tion; Sunset Beach,  
California; Transfer:  
Orange Coast College,  
California; Band 3.

**IRVING**  
A.B.; Long  
Trans-  
Ins  
Ar

**THOMAS L. GRAEFF;**  
A.B.; Theatre Arts—  
Motion Pictures; Corona  
Del Mar, California;  
ΔX; Campus Theater.

**DALE C. GRESSETH;**  
A.B.; Music; Lomita,  
California; A Capella  
Choir; Choral Club; Or-  
chestra.

**LINDY LOU HADLEY**  
B.S.; Physical Educa-  
tion; Venice, Califor-  
nia; Transfer: Los An-  
geles City College, Calif.



**MARTHA**  
B.S.;  
Alban

episode of  
**PERRY MASON**,  
has mostly fond memo-  
ries of making **TEEN-  
AGERS FROM OUTER  
SPACE**—though the after-  
math (Ursula Pearson's  
ominous "until") was any-  
thing but pleasant. "The whole  
thing ended rather badly, be-  
cause we were investors in the  
movie and the only way that  
we were able to recoup our in-  
vestment was by filing suit. Af-  
ter that, you know, we were  
hardly friends—but Tom and  
David were quite pleasant  
people. I understand both of  
them are dead, now." (*Scarlet  
Street* has been unable to  
trace the star of **TEENAGERS  
FROM OUTER SPACE**. Both  
Pearsons believe "David Love" to  
be merely a stage name, but have  
no knowledge of the fledgling actor's  
true identity.)

"There were several people in the  
film who had a lot of experience," Bryan  
Pearson recalls. "There was a character actor  
who played the grandfather: Harvey Dunn. Love-  
ly old man. King Moody did several things after  
**TEENAGERS**. Dawn Anderson was a very well-  
known radio actress; to the best of my knowledge,  
she was on **ONE MAN'S FAMILY**. We were all very fond  
of Dawn and enjoyed working with her. My personal ex-  
perience was in stage and television in Europe. I was in the  
first actual television series in England, which was called  
**KALEIDOSCOPE**. I was also an assistant producer at the  
BBC, so I got a very interesting background in early televi-  
sion and was one of the few qualified people around in the  
50s. But I gave it all up to come to the States, and the first  
thing that I did was that horrible film!"

\*\*\*

Looking at Tom Graeff's photo in his *UCLA Yearbook*,  
at the bright, winning, hopeful smile on his boyish face,  
it's easy to feel a sense of loss, of dashed hopes and youth-  
ful aspiration gone astray. The graduate looks eager to con-  
quer the world. Unfortunately, the world conquered him:  
After **TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE**, Tom Graeff all  
but vanished from the sub-Hollywood scene. Bill Warren  
notes in *Keep Watching the Skies!* that the entrepreneur re-

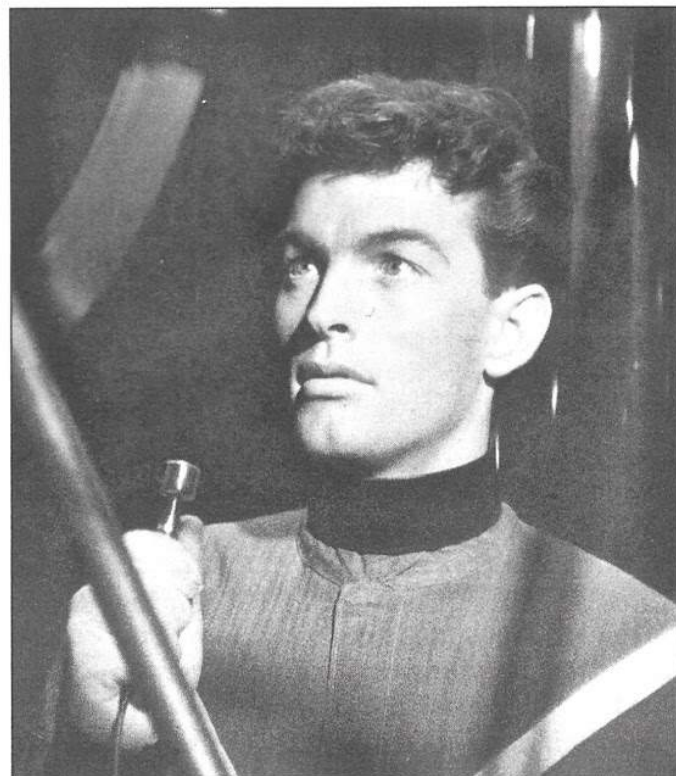
**LEFT: Thomas Lockyear Graeff's photograph in the  
1952 UCLA Yearbook (middle photo, left row) shows a  
bright, eager young man ready to conquer the film world.  
Photo courtesy of the UCLA Alumni Association.**

surfaced in 1968, when Joyce Haber's column in the *Los An-  
geles Times* reported that Graeff had placed a *Variety* ad tout-  
ing a script described as "remarkable, tensely exciting, su-  
perbly written, a spell-binding masterpiece, hilarious and  
chilling at once." The title: **ORF**. The asking price: A mere  
\$500,000. The proposed star: Carl Reiner. The plot: According  
to Reiner, it concerned "a man's head that's kept alive on a  
machine and goes to court." The end result of Graeff using  
Reiner's name to promote the project: Reiner threatened to  
take his head to court.

"Tom Graeff was under a lot of stress and strain and I  
think he completely snapped," claims Bryan Pearson. "The  
poor man went completely mental not long after the situa-  
tion with **TEENAGERS**; in fact, I was still in Hollywood when  
he was proclaiming himself to be the second coming of  
Jesus. He had huge meetings on church steps and put out tre-  
mendous banners and mailings. He was a very sick person.  
It's sad, because he was a genius in his own way. He wasn't  
a director at all; he was a technician. His direction was  
very stilted and comes across that way in the film. Every-  
body talked like robots, because that was his idea as to how  
aliens would talk, you know? It makes the film a joke."

"Tom was actually very talented," agrees Ursula Pear-  
son. "He was a fantastic con artist. He conned everybody  
into doing the movie for nothing. He would go to a house  
that he wanted to use for the exterior, and there would be a  
little old lady, and he'd say, 'We are students from UCLA,  
and we have this project. Could we use your exterior? We're  
trying to sell this to Hollywood, and your house would be in  
a real Hollywood movie.' Well, this little old lady was de-

*Continued on page 96*



**RIGHT: For years, film buffs have believed that David Love,  
the star of 1959's **TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE**, was  
really the film's writer/producer/director, Tom Graeff.**



## URSULA PEARSON REMEMBERS TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE

**Ursula Pearson:** There's a scene where a car rolls down an embankment and explodes. That was done right around the Beechwood area, the old Hollywood hills. It's near the Capitol Records building, someplace behind that. We took the car, an old jalopy, there. Tom Graeff bought that! (Laughs) And then we just pushed the car over the embankment, and it rolled down and exploded. We had no fire protection; we had no permits. Nothing! We just did it! And we got away with it! The flying saucer was a model about 13 feet in diameter. I think that's about the size of it. It was parked somewhere in the Hollywood hills during the shooting and we just left it. No guards, nothing! Just left it and, next day, we'd come back and shoot some more. (Laughs) It sat there for quite awhile. I think it was Gloria Swanson who lived nearby and she used it as publicity for herself. She said she was so shocked; she saw this flying saucer and she thought it was real. She called the newspapers and the police. I'm sure she knew it was fake, but it was a good gimmick to have her name mentioned. (Laughs)

**SS:** How old was Tom Graeff when he made *TEENAGERS*?

**UP:** He was in his 20s. He had just come out of UCLA.

**SS:** He lived with David Love . . .

**UP:** David was very reticent, very shy and retiring and feminine in his manner. Soft. He was the feminine influence in their life; he was a very sweet, nice person, but unassuming. David was the one who did all the cooking. He was very much in the background. Didn't say or think anything by himself. Tom did his thinking for him. Tom was the stronger, intellectually. We really never got to know David that well.

**SS:** Did Tom and David go through UCLA together?

**UP:** No, I don't think David was smart enough to go through UCLA.

**SS:** How did you first meet Tom?

**UP:** Through an ad in the paper. He advertised that he needed financing. My husband was a stage actor from England. We had just come to Hollywood; he wanted to break into Hollywood show business. We saw this ad, and we had some money. If you want to know, I can tell you how much we invested, how much the movie cost to make. It's ridiculous! It cost \$5,000.

**SS:** That was the entire financing?

**UP:** Yes. Bryan and I even doubted that the entire \$5,000 was invested in the movie, because we think that Tom

Graeff and David Love also lived off the money. You must remember, in the 50s that was a lot of money.

**SS:** Did you remain friends with Tom and David after making *TEENAGERS*?

**UP:** We lost track of Tom in 1959, because we had a financial arrangement with him and he didn't live up to it. We got no penny of our investment back, and we had to take him to court. From then on, of course, the friendship turned to hate. Being very young and emotional at the time, I was so angry, because he was taking my future by denying us at least our investment. It became very personal; I hated him so much I put a curse on him. (Laughs) Two or three years later, the *LA Times* had a center spread, a huge advertisement for Tom Graeff, who was professing to be Jesus Christ II. He ap-



*Bryan and Ursula Pearson in 1955.  
Photo courtesy of Ursula Pearson.*

peared on the steps of a Presbyterian church; I think it was on Gower in Hollywood. We went to see him and hear him, and there he was, preaching that he was Jesus Christ II. So I think he had gone mad.

**SS:** Tell us a bit more about the filming.

**UP:** Gene Sterling played the Leader. He was the one with the horrible fake beard. He lived with his mother; she owned a house which had formerly been owned by Rudolph Valentino, in the Hollywood Hills near Cajuenga Park. That's where some of the scenes were shot. Whenever Gene appeared on screen, whenever he directed his people via satellite—that was done in the house that was formerly Valentino's. It was done in a very primitive way; they just used a television set and superimposed the whole thing.

**SS:** What about the aliens' costumes?

**UP:** The uniforms for the spacemen were thin cotton overalls made for

gas station attendants. Around the ankles they wore strange space boots, right? Well, they were regular shoes and, around the ankles, they put cuffs. Spats, I guess—cardboard painted black. (Laughs) Then there's the monster, this lobster that we bought at some fish shop! That's another item Tom had to pay cash for! (Laughs) The lobster was dying, maybe because we didn't keep him in the right water or something. He was half—no, he wasn't half dead; he was 90% dead when we started to film him, so he didn't move enough. We put little thin wires on him to move his pincers; we had to pull them up and down while he was on camera. The cave where the monster was kept was just a little hole, maybe 10 inches across in some hill. It was just a tiny little hole, but filming it close up made it appear big.

**SS:** Your husband acted under the name Bryan Grant. Is he still acting?

**UP:** No. My husband found out that show business was not lucrative enough. He went into real estate, and we divorced about 22 years ago. He lives in Hawaii. Happily. I mean financially very happily. (Laughs)

**SS:** And you?

**UP:** I struggle. I do tours for businesses that want to give their sales people incentive. After six months, if you've made your quota, you get a trip. That's what I do.

**SS:** It's a shame that *TEENAGERS* didn't turn out better for you.

**UP:** Well, Tom had a face that was very honest-looking; he had the perfect look for a con artist. That's why people trusted him. "Sure, you can have the camera! We trust you!" As a matter of fact, when we went to court and sued him, Tom said, "Look, I was the author, I was the director, I was the camera man, and I also played a small part. I did all the work. I need to be paid for that." The judge said, "You cannot be paid for that because the other people have to be paid for their services." And Tom said, "Well, we had all these expenses." And the judge said, "Well, where are your receipts?" And Tom said, "Well, Your Honor, they were in a shoe box and we just moved, and the shoe box got lost." And the judge said, "You have such an honest face. I believe you. Case dismissed."

**SS:** Really?

**UP:** And that's when I got angry. I said, "I curse this man! I hope he fries in hell!" (Laughs) Well, going crazy and thinking you're Jesus Christ—that's hell, isn't it?



# BOOM! IT'S THE FANTASTIC FOUR

## by Buddy Scalera

It was more than 30 years ago that comic-book wizard Stan Lee created the Fantastic Four, a new group of superheroes that he hoped would cash in on the overwhelming popularity of DC's *Justice League of America* comic book.

Lee did something in his writing that had never before been attempted in comicdom history. He made his characters believable. Although Reed Richards (Mr. Fantastic), Sue Storm (the Invisible Girl), Johnny Storm (the Human Torch), and Ben Grimm (the Thing) were not entirely original characters, they spoke and behaved like real people with real emotions. Lee's break with traditional comics created a bridge from the relatively small following he had garnered with his camp horror and Western stories to a mass audience. It was Lee's remarkable sense of timing and promotion that created a groundswell of positive feedback.

In November 1961, writer Stan Lee, penciller Jack Kirby, and inker Joe Sinnott enjoyed unprecedented publishing success. Sales of *Timely Comics*' (later *Marvel Comics*) new supergroup far exceeded Lee's hope to create a team rivaling the *Justice League*. By the third issue, Lee had labeled *The Fantastic Four* "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine," a banner that remains today. "*The Fantastic Four* has a timeless quality," explains current editor Ralph Macchio, who characterizes the comic as "science fantasy."

Executive producer (and legendary director) Roger Corman is banking that the same timelessness that launched the Era of Silver Age Comic Books will translate well to the screen. Tweaking the group's origins slightly, Corman's *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* film interpretation promises to deliver the character interaction and action that make the comic book fresh and exciting even after three decades of derring do.

*The Fantastic Four* relied heavily on Stan Lee's basic misunderstanding of science. Scientifically impossible events became staples of the writer's universe. Lee created characters granted (and sometimes cursed by) incredible powers through science gone awry. He is credited with the creation or co-creation of such significant Marvel stars as Spider-Man, the Hulk, Iron Man, Daredevil, the X-Men, and the Avengers.

*Fantastic Four* #1 featured an origin story in which brilliant scientist Dr. Reed Richards and pilot Ben Grimm hoped to beat "the Commies" to "the Stars." (Nowhere in particular; just plain old "Outer Space.") One night, Reed; Ben; Reed's fiancée Sue Storm; and Sue's kid brother, Johnny, commandeer a government spacecraft for a daring trip to the stars.

Barely out of Earth's atmosphere, a sound (rak tac tac) fills the sleek spacecraft. Cosmic light particles! "They're only

rays of light!" Grimm shouts forebodingly over the noisy light rays. "You can't feel 'em—but they'll affect you just the same!"

Making a crash landing back on Earth, the almost-astronauts experience the effects of exposure to cosmic radiation. Sue begins to vanish as her brother Johnny bursts into flames. Reed's body distorts into impossible rubberlike proportions while Ben undergoes a hideous metamorphosis into a stony, orange monster.

In their interpretation of the origin, screenwriters Craig J. Nevius and Kevin Rock and director Oley Sassone rewrite the *Fantastic Four*'s origin much as Tim Burton rewrote *Batman*'s.

In Burton's *BATMAN* (1989), Jack Napier (Jack Nicholson) is responsible for the murder of young Bruce Wayne's parents, thus creating in the grief-stricken boy the obsessive vigilante Batman (Michael Keaton). Years later, a chance meeting with the Caped Crusader causes Jack Napier to fall into a vat of chemicals, transforming him into the demented Joker. In the Bob Kane comic-book original, however, it's a crook named Joe Chill who murders Wayne's parents, not the Joker.

*THE FANTASTIC FOUR* makes the Jeweler (Ian Trigger)—known in the comic as the Moleman—the catalyst for the *Fantastic Four*'s bizarre transformation. By stealing a large diamond from Reed Richards's outer space laboratory, the Jew-

eler exposes Reed (Alex Hyde-White), Sue (Rebecca Staab), Ben (Michael Bailey Smith), and Johnny (Jay Underwood) to cosmic radiation. Their laboratory is destroyed, but they survive to become the *Fantastic Four*.

Dr. Doom (Joseph Culp) hopes to unlock the secrets of the *Four*'s radically altered DNA. Doom hides within the folds of his body armor while hoping to find a cure for his bodily disfigurement, also caused by exposure to cosmic rays.

Doom, who made his first appearance in *Fantastic Four* #5, has been one of the chief villains to challenge the *Four*. One of the most powerful and popular villains in the Marvel Universe, Doom's motivation for challenging the *Four* is that they are one of the barriers preventing him from ruling the planet. In both the movie and the comic interpretations, Victor Von Doom's fate is sealed when a miscalculation in one of his scientific formulas causes a bizarre explosion. His face is irreversibly scarred in the accident. (Ironically, it is Reed Richards who points out Doom's error, only to have his warning go unheeded.) "Dr. Doom is what Reed Richards would have been if he were evil," explains *Fantastic Four* editor Ralph Macchio.



**THE FANTASTIC FOUR:** Johnny Storm (Jay Underwood), Sue Storm (Rebecca Staab), Reed Richards (Alex Hyde-White), and Ben Grimm (Michael Bailey Smith).

*Continued on page 93*





Rebecca Staab

It's far from being a novelty for Rebecca Staab, *THE FANTASTIC FOUR*'s Invisible Girl, to cast no reflection. As Daphne Collins on the ill-fated 1991 revival of *DARK SHADOWS*, she was vampirized by none other than Barnabas Collins, television's most famous dead denizen. Here, in an exclusive *Scarlet Street* interview, Rebecca lets us in on a working actress' strangest problem: how to be unseen by the right people.

**Scarlet Street:** Was there much competition for the part of Susan Storm?

**Rebecca Staab:** You know, I have no idea. The casting director had seen me on an episode of *THE HAT SQUAD* and had me in mind. One night, he was sitting at home, and the show was on. So he called the producer and said, "Turn on CBS; this is the girl I was talking about!" (Laughs) The producer watched the episode, and said, "Oh, I think she's perfect!" Then they called the director and showed him the tape, and he said, "Well, she looks great to me. Let's get her in so I can meet her." I went in and it all worked out.

**SS:** How do you audition to play an invisible girl? Do you actually show up?

**RS:** (Laughs) Yeah. Actually, one of the audition scenes was a scene in which I start to be invisible, and then I materialize, but only halfway; my bottom half is still invisible. I had to play that whole shock of looking down and finding only half of me.

**SS:** Were you familiar with the comic-book characters?

# NOW YOU SEE HER... Rebecca Staab

Interviewed by Jessie Lilley

**RS:** I really wasn't. I knew the name, but I was never a big comic-book reader. But they had pictures of the characters, the comic-book drawings, and in fact Susan resembles me very much!

**SS:** After you were cast, did you do any research by reading the comics?

**RS:** All of us did. A lot of it was just playing a human who now realizes that she's able to do something remarkable, and trying to make it as believable as possible. But, you know, the interesting thing about it was that, when we met, we really were like the characters. Alex Hyde-White, who plays Reed Richards, instantly took charge. I had the most incredible relationship with Jay Underwood, who plays Johnny, my brother. We were always in the dressing room, playing games. (Laughs) I mean, it was just a constant game-fest. Michael Behn Smith, who plays Ben Grimm, was so much like the character. He's got these huge, monster eyes, and he's the biggest sweetheart! He's got this child-like demeanor that is so incongruent with his physical appearance. There was never a process that we had to go through to bond, or to identify with each other. It was instantaneous.

**SS:** *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* is an effects-heavy film made on a relatively small budget. Did that make filming especially difficult?

**RS:** I wouldn't say difficult. I think it was focused, because they didn't have the budget to horse around with it for a long time. Creatively, it would have been nice if there had been a bigger budget, because so much of it did go into the effects—but it wasn't too grueling.

**SS:** For you, what was the most difficult scene to achieve in the film?

**RS:** Well, it was the most difficult, but I think it's going to be the best scene in the film. It's right after the space crash. Each one of us has become acquainted with our powers, but we're so confused and so scared. We shot it at night; we wanted to make it very real and believable. It was such a rewarding night, because everybody worked so hard. It was very taxing for us as actors to make the moment real, but we had complete cooperation from the director, and the crew was just wonderful. I think that was the most difficult scene; probably the most harrowing. On the other hand, some of the scenes were difficult because we had to imagine what the effect was going to be. Even though it's explained, you still have to manufacture a reaction to something that you really don't know. (Laughs)

**SS:** Can you let us in on any of your invisibility secrets?

**RS:** Well, for anyone familiar with the comic books, it's really not that much

*THE FANTASTIC FOUR takes place before the Invisible Girl and Mr. Fantastic (Rebecca Staab and Alex Hyde-White) become happily married super heroes.*





# FLAME ON!

## Jay Underwood

Interviewed by Richard Valley

He's been the Boy Who Could Fly. An android. An invisible egghead caught suddenly nude in the high-school hallway. He's even been the Kryptonite Kid in one spectacular episode of the popular SUPERBOY series. Now, having done his glow-green bit for DC Comics, Jay Underwood takes on the fire-red mantle of Marvel's Human Torch in THE FANTASTIC FOUR.

**Scarlet Street:** How did you win the part of Johnny Storm?

**Jay Underwood:** Well, they sent me a script. (Laughs) I went in and did the audition, and I got the part. They said to me before I left—I have brown hair—they said, "Would you be willing to dye your hair blonde?" And I said, "Absolutely." They said "Johnny Storm's a blonde, and to stay true to the

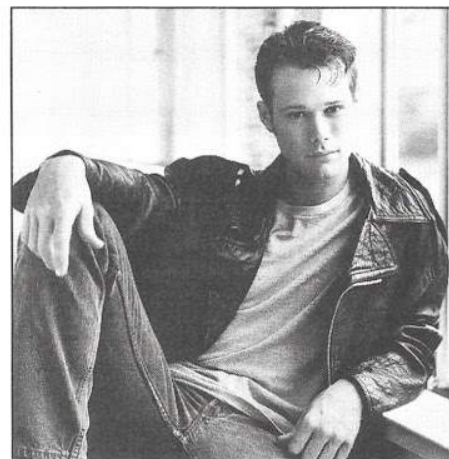
comics, we can't have you running around as a brown-haired dude." So I said, "No problem," and they called me back and said, "You got it." And then I went and got my hair dyed.

**SS:** It's a very physical role . . .

**JU:** They're doing a lot of the special effects via computer, so there wasn't a whole lot going on in terms of flying and stuff for me—but, yeah, definitely, it was a physical kind of part. We're running around spaceships and doing this and that.

**SS:** Were you familiar with the comic-book characters?

**JU:** The only one I knew of before was the Thing; I remember seeing a cartoon on TV with the Thing in it. I wasn't a real comic-book person before getting the movie. I remember reading *Mad* magazine, and *Richie Rich*, but I was never really into comics. The minute I got it—the minute all of us got it—we were down at comic-book stores, grabbing up everything we could! When we began shooting, everyone brought in everything they had found in differ-



Jay Underwood

Photo by Exley

ent comic-book stores. We had a wealth of information. In fact, my fiancée's dad is an avid collector of comic-book memorabilia, and he sent me stuff, too.

**SS:** Has Marvel Comics been much involved with the film?

**JU:** Well, I got to meet Stan Lee. He was on the set for the first couple of days. So that was a treat—to meet the guy who created this stuff. He seemed to be hip to the choices of the people for the four parts. He seemed happy with the look and everything of it all.

**SS:** THE FANTASTIC FOUR has a lot of special effects done on a small budget. Did that make for difficulties?

**JU:** Well, it'll be interesting to see the final product, no doubt. The money certainly didn't go into things like the actor's salaries! (Laughs). Hopefully, it was put into the special effects. I never got near a flame.

**SS:** Not at all?

**JU:** Not at all, no. They used computer, and also they're going to use some puppet stuff. Actually, though, there's one scene where I set a brick on fire. It's when we first realize that we have these powers. I light this brick on fire, and this brick went up in flames. And that was kind of cool. (Laughs)

**SS:** Was any particular scene especially difficult and time-consuming to capture on film?

**JU:** Because it was low-budget, you tend to work longer hours in a shorter period of time. We ended up getting on this weird schedule, where we were shooting a lot of night stuff. It would stink, because you've been there for 12 hours and then suddenly—finally—your shot comes up, and suddenly you've got to be Johnny Storm—"Flame on!" You've got to be throwing fireballs and running around saving the universe. (Laughs) And you feel like you'd like to curl up in bed for about a week! It's kind of hard to rally your spirits, sometimes. And then, you know . . .

**SS:** It's the waiting that really does it.

Jay Underwood and Rebecca Staab will Storm into theatres this fall in Roger Corman's film version of Marvel's THE FANTASTIC FOUR.







Grover Dunn and Milton McClane (Jay Underwood and Wally Ward) are caught with their goosebumps showing in 1987's *THE INVISIBLE KID*.

**JU:** Oh, it'll kill you! We were working outside; we did these location shoots for the scene when our shuttle crashes. We all had these huge spacesuits on. That presented its own set of problems, in terms of overheating and having to do the stuff over and over. Once you got into the suit, you really couldn't take it off for most of the day. But no one said it was easy. (Laughs)

**SS:** For the most part, though, you wear the standard comic-book costume . . .

**JU:** I was the first one to put on the Spandex wardrobe. We'd been shooting some other scene, and they got it done, and they wanted me to throw it on. There were tons of people, and all these extras, and I was marched out first with this blue Spandex suit on. And I'm thinking, "Oh, brother! I can't believe I'm doing this! I mean, did Christopher Reeve start this way?" (Laughs)

**SS:** Probably.

**JU:** I tried to think of all the people who'd gone before me wearing suits like that—then it wasn't so bad.

**SS:** In the comic, Johnny's a hot-headed, impulsive kid. Does that carry over into the script?

**JU:** Yeah, I think so. He's got his moments where he's ready to jump down some people's throats. We tried to stay as true to the comic book as we could.

**SS:** *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* isn't your first sci-fi or superhero film.

**JU:** I'll tell you: It's the weirdest thing. I look back on the stuff that I've done, and I don't know what it is about me. There's obviously something; I continually get cast as superhero kind of people, people with special powers—in *THE BOY WHO COULD FLY*, and *THE INVISIBLE KID*, and *THE DAY MY KID WENT PUNK*, where

I turn into a punk rocker. I did an episode of *SUPERBOY*, too, where I turn into the Kryptonite Kid. I get all these "All-American Boy" parts, but they always wind up being kids with special powers. I did *NOT QUITE HUMAN*, three of those, where I played an android robot for the Disney Channel. You can pretty much tell when I'm going to get a part, do you know what I mean?

**SS:** Were *THE INVISIBLE KID* effects done the same way as Rebecca Staab's in *THE FANTASTIC FOUR*?

**JU:** We may have done more with props and things floating around on wires. I don't know if they did too much of that, because when Rebecca turns invisible—boom!—it's everything. Whatever is attached to her—clothing or

whatever else—turns invisible. With the *INVISIBLE KID*, if I'm wearing clothes, the clothes stay there, but my body is invisible. There's a scene in which I finally realize that I gotta take off my clothes in order to be invisible. We go to this basketball game—my friend and I—and we're messing with the basketball players and stuff—and at this point, we don't know how long it takes before it wears off. We're walking down the hallway just as the game's letting out, and—boom!—we become visible. And we're standing there in the buff, and everyone's running out the doors as we run through the school. It's kind of funny. (Laughs)

**SS:** Is it difficult, as Chip in Disney's *NOT QUITE HUMAN* films, to play an android?

**JU:** The first time was the toughest. Each time after that, all I had to do was find the character again—you know, recall the character, and suddenly, after shooting for a day or so, I was right back into it. But at first it was tough, figuring out exactly what I was going to do. I remember making out a list of questions and sitting down with the director and asking, "Can he do this, can he do that, does he do this, does he do that?" When I auditioned, they suggested I use Jeff Bridges' *STARMAN* character. It was an inspiration in that he's brand new to this planet, brand new to everything. That was a lot of what Chip was at first. His move-

ments were much more stilted. His head kind of jerked and twisted; it wasn't so fluid.

**SS:** Will there be any more *NOT QUITE HUMAN* movies?

**JU:** I don't think so—which is too bad, because the second one turned out to be the highest-rated show on the Disney Channel, ever. It beat out all their animation stuff.

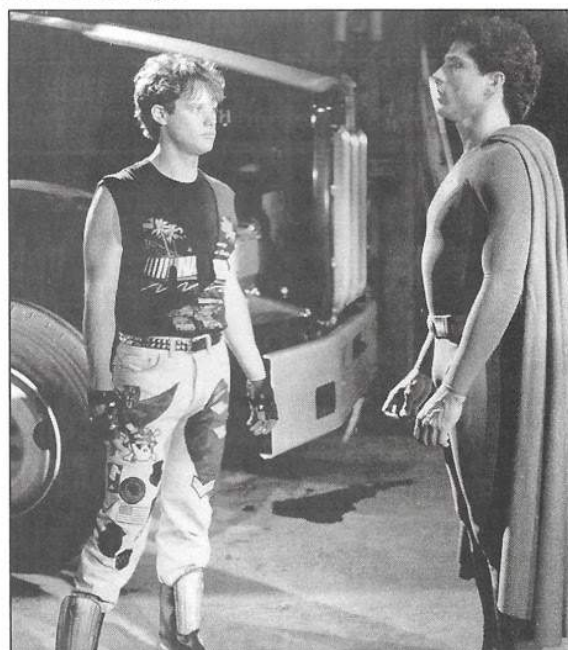
**SS:** On *SUPERBOY*, you played a villain called the Kryptonite Kid.

**JU:** It was great, because I don't often get the bad guy parts, and when I do I just relish them. I got to play a real mean kind of guy in *UNCLE BUCK*. I played Lucy's boyfriend, a guy named Buzz, and he's a real prick. But the Kryptonite Kid was great. I had a great time, because they did up the hair and the makeup and the outfits. I remember, before each take, I would have a Walkman, and I would play AC/DC, you know? Just blast it into my ears. So the minute they said "Action," I was ready! Boom! (Laughs) Throwing fire balls and all! With Johnny, I had to develop a way of throwing fire. I went through the comic and looked at every position that he stands in, or that his arms would be in, and I was able to incorporate all the stuff that's in the comic—and then I kind of stole from the Kryptonite Kid, in the way he throws a fireball, or when he blasts a fire ray. It isn't just some guy standing there with his arms sticking out.

**SS:** The comic-book fans will certainly appreciate it.

**JU:** Exactly, exactly. Like if Johnny wants a ray of fire to be especially

Underwood played the Kryptonite Kid in one episode of *SUPERBOY*. That's Gerard Christopher as Clark Kent's alter ego.





*Jay Underwood successfully played against his clean-cut image by starring on stage in a Los Angeles production of the sensational FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES.*

strong, he puts his two hands together. I used that where I found it appropriate.

**SS:** On stage, you appeared in *FORTUNE IN MEN'S EYES*, a prison drama that's very different from the lighter fare of most of your TV and film appearances.

**JU:** You know, it's funny, but *STILL NOT QUITE HUMAN* was coming out when I was doing the play, and so I was doing interviews for Disney and also talking about the play I was doing. Of course, the Disney publicity people had no idea what the play was about. I think a couple of publicity people came to the show, and I assume their reactions were, "Oh, my God!" (Laughs) But as an actor, I love to do whatever I can.

**SS:** And be as versatile as possible?

**JU:** And be as versatile as possible. Drama is something that I really love a lot. I would say I'm much more of a dramatic actor than a comedic actor. The play was great. I played Smitty, the guy who gets put in prison at the beginning—a nice, normal guy. It's basically about his evolution in prison. Eventually, by the end of the play, he's totally become this product of his environment; he's this horrific, horrifying kind of guy. Sal Mineo did it with Don Johnson in Los Angeles 20 years before us. Don Johnson played Smitty at the

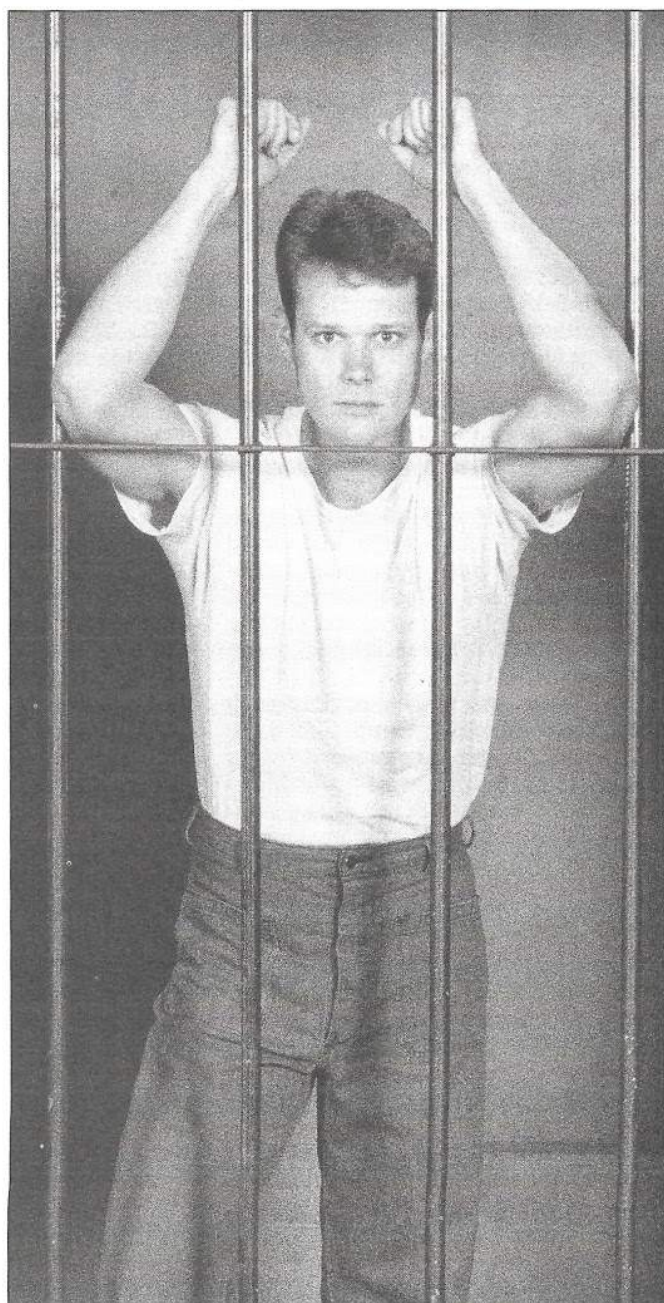
time. Sal played Rocky, and he also directed it. In fact, one of the actors who was in that production—I can't remember his name—he still lives in LA, and he saw the billboard out in front of the theatre. He stopped by during our rehearsals, and he came in and said, "I did this show here with Don Johnson and Sal Mineo 20 years ago." We heard from everyone that Sal really had his own agenda for this play. When he did it, he just took it and made it into something that he wanted it to be. He really went wild with the nudity and all kinds of stuff, and people were really shocked. Hopefully our version reached out to some people. I think it did. We didn't shy away from anything. There was some nudity in it, but everyone was concerned that it was not just for the sake of having nudity. It had to serve the story. The rape scene was quite brutal. I think we really went for it; we didn't shy away from it.

**SS:** Right.

**JU:** But it wasn't Sal Mineo's production.

**SS:** One last question: If *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* is successful enough to warrant a sequel, will you be interested?

**JU:** Absolutely! Absolutely! That would be terrific, and I would be right back on board. They were nice enough to give me the part, so if they want to do some more, I'll be there!



© Michael Lamont Photography

*Continued from page 88*

In its confrontations between villains and heroes, *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* will draw from the realistic character interaction which made the comic famous. The Thing, one of Marvel's most beloved characters, will be plagued by his grotesque appearance as an orange pop rock and by his devotion to the Fantastic Four, who have a sworn mission to protect the society that shuns him.

Since they first burst onto the scene as the World's Greatest Comic Magazine in 1961, the Fantastic Four have remained one of the crown jewels of Marvel Comics. Aficionados and fantasy-film buffs can only hope that a live-action interpretation of this science/fantasy superteam will fly, rather than quickly fade from sight. Roger Corman has stretched a small budget to its limits in order to accommodate the many mandatory effects shots. *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* will come out (this fall) fighting. To quote the mighty Thing: "It's Clobberin' Time!"



Joseph Culp as Dr. Doom



# Book Ends

## The Scarlet Street Review of Books

### IT'S PARTY TIME

Stephen J. McParland  
PTB Productions, 1992  
204 pages—Price Unlisted

What's a review of a beach-movie book doing in the pages of *Scarlet Street*? Well, the answer to that lies in another question: What were Vincent Price, Boris Karloff, and Basil Rathbone doing in beach movies? Paying the rent, one would think. But a new book by Stephen J. McParland, *It's Party Time*, attempts to shed further light on what the author feels is a badly-neglected genre: the beach movie.

*It's Party Time* is jam-packed with photos and info, taking up just over 200 pages. Chapter Six, subtitled "More Bikinis, Bombs, Missiles and Monsters," is devoted to beach flicks starring the above-mentioned actors, including Price's *DR. GOLDFOOT AND THE BIKINI MACHINE* (1966) and *DR. GOLDFOOT AND THE GIRL BOMBS* (1966), which were AIP's campy spoofs of the James Bond films—particularly *GOLDFINGER* (1964).

Karloff and Rathbone appeared in *GHOST IN THE INVISIBLE BIKINI* (1966), which had a plot, according to author McParland, "that combined the unlikely subjects of ghouls, corpses, and a search for hidden treasure." As if any of these movies actually made sense! McParland further points out that the movie shoot seemed to be jinxed. A grip fell to his death on the first day of shooting, and within a year of the film's release, rock star Bobby Fuller, as well as Karloff, Rathbone, and several other cast members, were dead.

The combo of surf, sand, and horror got off to a rousing start with *BEACH PARTY* (1963), which featured a cameo appearance by Price. Pop-eyed Peter Lorre popped up in *MUSCLE BEACH PARTY* (1964). Elsa Lanchester, *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* herself, appeared with none other than Buster Keaton in *PAJAMA PARTY* (1964). Keaton, who played Chief Rotten Eagle, was billed along with Dorothy Lamour as a special guest star. Lanchester had third billing, after Tommy Kirk (*Scarlet Street* #10) and Annette Funicello, the mandatory under-30 leads.

McParland does a good job covering these films, mentioning their vir-

tues as well as the failures (such as 1964's *HORROR OF PARTY BEACH*; a film described as being so bad, it's good). He realizes that he isn't writing about Shakespeare, yet his text is informative, examining each film on its own merits. Although the interior production design and typesetting looks a little cheap, *It's Party Time* is a bright and bouncy read, which pretty much captures the style of the whole Beach Movie genre.

—Sean Farrell

### FLYING THROUGH HOLLYWOOD BY THE SEAT OF MY PANTS

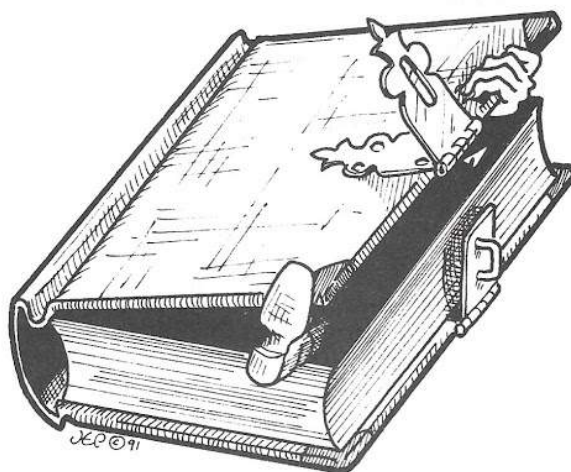
Sam Arkoff with Richard Trubo  
Carol Publishing Group  
287 pages—\$18.95

*Oh, that my enemy should write a book!*

This quote is particularly apt in considering this volume, in which Mr. Arkoff gives his version of the rise of American International Pictures, and his career as, first, vice president, and then chairman of the enterprising "Schlock Shop" that made the major studios sit up, take notice, and (probably) gnash their teeth.

Arkoff is not a man to hide his light under a bushel; if someone else tried to do so, he would just spray that bushel with gold paint, announce that he'd found "Rumplestiltskin's Original Straw," and advertise that there were rubies hidden in it. Such men make enemies, and it's understandable that this version of Hollywood history has stirred up a bubbling cauldron of controversy in Lotus Land. This is all to the good, as the arguments about Who said What to Whom, Who got the Great Idea for What, and How Certain Deals were Made, are likely to spawn additional literary efforts, if only to refute Arkoff's version.

To insist upon veridical accuracy, however, is to miss the book's point. Arkoff's view of Hollywood in the early 50s, when stars were falling, the old heads of the studios were going or gone, and the studios themselves, rocked by the loss of their theatre chains and the advent of television, were floundering like beached whales, is both



trenchant and truthful. He and his partner, Jim Nicholson, began producing and distributing movies at a time when the industry seemed moribund and, possibly, doomed. They succeeded because they were innovators. They saw that, at a time when the majors were scaling back production and theatres were crying for product, there was room for an independent—if it was ruthlessly economical and aimed its product at a specific part of the populous. Arkoff and Nicholson did not invent teenagers, but they were probably the first to notice the gap between Disney's family films and the major studios' costume dramas, tear jerkers, and spectacles. Their pictures had young people in them, doing what young people wanted to do, with nary a disapproving parent in sight. The critics, high on auteur, laughed at, censured, or ignored American International's pictures, but teenagers across the country, in movie houses or drive-ins, had found a place to go and something to watch when they got there.

This was not a philanthropic endeavor. Arkoff and Nicholson had gone into business to make money, not art, and their caveats were few but important: Don't spend a lot of money on any one film. Don't pay for stars if at all possible. Don't make a movie until you create an ad campaign that will draw the kids. Don't make a movie without knowing your audience. Frequently, Jim Nicholson would come up with a title, the publicity men would come up with theatre cards, and only then would the writers be called in! Arkoff is not ashamed of his economy; however, he seems to agree with Roger Corman that the director probably should not have used that same shot of a flaming ceiling in quite so many Poe epics.

Readers looking for an in-depth examination of AIP's early horror movies, or at Corman's voyage through Poe Land, will be disappointed, for Arkoff's view is that of a producer and busi-



nessman, not of a director or critic. When he does write about plot lines, he sometimes mixes up an ending, and he seems unaware that *THE HAUNTED PALACE* (1963) is not a Poe story, but was lifted from one of H. P. Lovecraft's shuddersome pieces. This is to be expected, as the above works were, to him, merely phases that AIP went through. Sci-fi cheapies, beach movies, Italian-made epics, protest films, blaxploitation movies: They were all trends either created by AIP or followed by them.

Arkoff has a good deal to say about all of these trends, and (accuracy be damned) he has good stories to tell, from quarreling with Walt Disney over Annette Funicello to facing down Louis Nizer over the name of a subsidiary. He does have his mean side. Having had trouble with Bette Davis on *BUNNY O'HARE* (1972), he proceeds to blast her because, while filming *WICKED STEPMOTHER* (1989), she "walked off the set and never returned. She told [Larry] Cohen [the director] that she had to fly to New York to get her teeth fixed—and she refused to come back." The fact that Davis was valiantly

fighting the effects of a stroke, the fact that she died soon afterward, even before the movie was released—these points are ignored so that Arkoff can make his case for not working with temperamental stars. In doing so, he merely makes himself look petty.

There is much enjoyable reading here, however, as there was much that was laudable in AIP. Arkoff enjoys writing about the deals, gimmicks, and campaigns. He frankly admits that he used unknown actors and directors because they were cheap. The result was that he started Jack Nicholson's career and boosted Nick Nolte, Don Johnson, David Cronenberg, and a score of others. His deals resulted in the American distribution of Mario Bava's classic *BLACK SUNDAY* (1961), as well as that of *MAD MAX* (1979).

In his final chapter, Arkoff comes down hard on present-day Hollywood, with its bloated big-budget pictures and endless sequels, and asks, relevantly: Why make one \$50-million film stuffed with big-name stars and expensive directors and effects, when you can make ten \$5-million movies with young, hungry actors and direc-

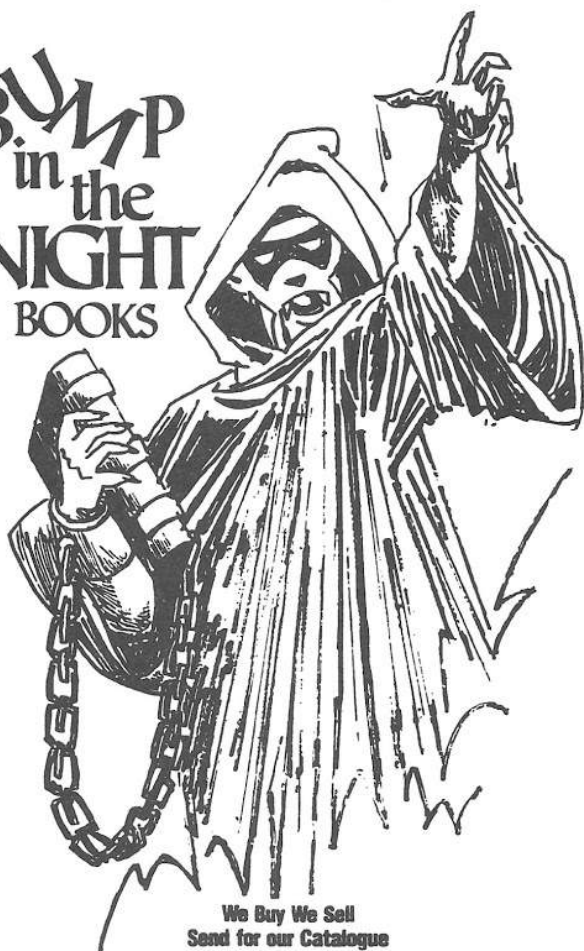
tors who will be the filmmakers of the next generation? Does anyone in La La Land have an answer?

A couple of minor notes about the editing: Someone should have noticed the page in which "the Poe stores" resides, though I enjoyed the vision conjured up by this mistake, and someone should have informed Mr. Arkoff that Pope Sextus did not hire Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel's ceiling. Anyone who saw *THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY* (1965) knows that it was Rex Harrison—sorry—Pope Julius II who commissioned the work.

I recommend this book to those who want to know the secrets, such as they are, of low-budget film making, and to those who like good stories. Here's a final one: Arkoff was having lunch with Roger Ebert when "Rex Reed breezed into the room, grabbed me by the arm, and couldn't contain his enthusiasm. 'Sam,' he said, 'I just saw Q! What a surprise! That wonderful Method performance by Michael Moriarty, right in the middle of all that dreck!' 'Why, thank you,' I told him. 'The dreck was my idea!'"

—Ken Schachtman

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## FEATHERING HIS NEST

*Continued from page 18*

**SS:** That's funny. Is *BATMAN* your first experience doing a voice for an animated series?

**PW:** As far as being a regular character on one, but, you know, I did a couple of voices for *TOM AND JERRY KIDS* yesterday. I do more and more of them. The first one I did was *MY LITTLE PONY*, years ago.

**SS:** Is taping the soundtrack fun?

**PW:** It's always a giggle. It's always a giggle. You know, we can show up for

the taping all smelly, and we don't have to dress up.

**SS:** How familiar were you with the Penguin before taking the role?

**PW:** Well, I'm a big Burgess Meredith fan; I used to love the way Burgess played it on the show in the 60s. You know, for me the Bible is the script. And the way the Penguin is written, he's so erudite, so bright and intellectual. And so I just had to sort of use that, and find this character, his nastiness in a really bright way. But I was pretty intimidated because of Burgess Meredith, you know?

**SS:** Being a writer yourself—a lyricist—and obviously having a way with words, do you contribute anything to the Penguin's dialogue?

**PW:** Very little. You know, there are things that I've done where I've written everything; I've rewritten every word. But these cartoons are really well-written, well-tuned by the time we get into the studio with it. So I would love to tell you that the really funny ones are mine, but it's not so. (Laughs)



Everett Collection



## TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE

*Continued from page 86*

lighted! She even let him use her electricity! So he got that for nothing. He got the cameras; they were rented, and he got them on a retainer. He told everyone he would pay when the whole thing was finished. I think the only thing he actually paid for was the film. He bought film. But everything else was rented. The extras were told they'd be paid after the movie had sold. All the actors, the ones who were professionals or wished to be professionals, were promised film copies, which they could use to get agents and whatnot. They all went along with it; they

were all hungry, and they said, 'All right. We'll do it. We'll do it for nothing—until.' And not one of them was paid."

In one respect, at least, Graeff was lucky. Teen horror films were tremendously popular in the late 50s and, probably for that reason alone, Warner Bros. snapped up *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* (reportedly for \$28,000) to release on a double bill with *GIGANTIS, THE FIRE MONSTER*. (At no point in the film does anyone refer to the alien invaders as teenagers; nor are they played by anyone actually in his Wonder Years.) *TEENAGERS* even managed to garner a favorable review from *Variety*'s Ron:

Perhaps due in part to a lower than low budget, the film often is inescapably inept. But the film also is carefully thought out, concocted of exploitable elements, yet different from its many predecessors. While Graeff may not have made a good picture, he has made an interesting one that every now and again smacks of brilliance.

The rest of the story has that familiar Hollywood ring to it. Tom Graeff was hardly the first man to star a *Loved* one in his movies. Marion Davies, for example, owed her entire motion picture career to sugar-daddy William Randolph Hearst. However, unlike fellow film pioneer Orson Welles, whose script for *CITIZEN KANE* (1941) owed as much to Hearst and Davies as Davies owed to Hearst, Graeff could never make extravagant claims for the quality of his first (and presumably only) feature. Happily, it doesn't matter. Lack of class has never stopped a bad film—even one as bad as *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE*—from having its devotees. Let "Thor" have the last word:

"I was flying back to England in 1977, when Freddy Laker was running the Sky Train. I went from Los Angeles on the Sky Train, and the flight attendant asked the passengers if they wanted to watch a movie. I said, 'What is it?' And she said, 'Oh, it's a science-fiction thing.' I said, 'No, I'm not really interested, thank you very much.' She left, and this chap sitting next to me asked, 'Don't you like science-fiction films?' I said, 'Not really; they don't do much for me.' And he said, 'Oh, I love science-fiction films! My favorite film of all is about these aliens and this girl swimming in a pool, and this horrible alien shoots her and she turns into . . .' And I said, 'A skeleton.' Well, he looked at me and said, 'Yeah! Did you see that movie?' And I thought, 'Of all the coincidences! The one and only person who remembers *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* and loves it is sitting right next to me!'"

And that's show biz!



### TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE

#### Credits

1959, Topaz Film Corporation, distributed by Warner Bros. Director/Producer/Screenplay/Photography/Sound/Special Effects/Editor: Tom Graeff. Production Associates: C. R. Kaltenthaler, Gene Sterling, Bryan G. Pearson (Bryan Grant). Running time: 85 minutes.

#### Cast

David Love (Derek), Dawn Anderson (Betty Morgan), Harvey B. Dunn (Grandpa Morgan), Bryan Grant/Bryan Pearson (Thor), Tom Lockyear/Tom Graeff (Joe Rogers), Robert King Moody (Spaceship Captain), Frederic Welch (Dr. Brandt), Helen Sage (Miss Morse, his nurse), Sonia Torgenson (Alice, the girl in the swimming pool), Gene Sterling (The Leader), Ursula Hansen/Ursula Pearson (Hilda), Carl Dickens, Billy Bridges, James Conklin, Ralph Lowe, Bill DeLand, Bob Williams, Don DeClue, Don Chambers, Jim MacGeorge, Kent Rogers, Sol Resnick, Robert Regas, Horst Ehrhardt.





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## WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?

### Credits

1971, United Artists release of a Filmways-Raymax picture. Executive Producer: Edward S. Feldman. Producer: George Edwards. Director: Curtis Harrington. Associate Producer: James C. Pratt. Screenplay: Henry Farrell. Director of Photography: Lucien Ballard. Music: David Raksin. Film Editor: William H. Reynolds. Art Director: Eugene Lourie. Assistant Director: Claude Binyon, Jr. Assistant Choreographer: Thelma "Tad" Tadlock. Property Master: Ace Holmes. Script Supervisor: Allan Creedy. Color by DeLuxe. Running time: 101 minutes.

### Cast

Debbie Reynolds (Adelle Bruckner); Shelley Winters (Helen Hill); Dennis Weaver (Lincoln Palmer); Agnes Moorehead (Sister Alma); Michael Mac Liammoir (Hamilton Starr); Sammee Lee Jones (Winona Palmer); Robbi Morgan (Rosalie Greenbaum); Helene Winston (Mrs. Greenbaum); Molly Dodd (Mrs. Rigg); Peggy Rea (Mrs. Schultz); Yvette Vickers (Mrs. Barker); Paulle Clark (Mrs. Plumb); Swen Swenson (Gigolo); Timothy Carey (Tramp); Harry Stanton (Malcolm Hays); Logan Ramsey (Detective Sergeant West); Peggy Lloyd Patten (Ellie Banner); Gary Combs (Matt Hill); Sadie Delfino (Midget Lady).

## WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?

*Continued from page 56*

caller, Linc arrives at the school to find Adelle dead, dressed in her recital costume, and tied to a ladder—a human, blood-drenched cutout. At the piano, Helen smiles as she frantically pounds out "Goody, Goody" for her rouged and powdered dance partner.

\*\*\*

*HELEN, the director's least personal project, reveals his greatest discomfort with narrative content.*

—Michael Kerbel, *The Village Voice*

*Well, I think it's the film that I've made that is closest to my heart.*

—Curtis Harrington, *Scarlet Street*

So much for critical interpretation of an artist's work! Yet Harrington's interests and concerns—the Great Depression, Hollywood's outer fringes, phony religion (as personified by Sister Alma)—are right there on the screen for all to see.

Sister Alma, like the tramp (Timothy Carey) at the dance-school door or the midget (Sadie Delfino) seen briefly on the street, may appear to be only a dash of Hollywood color, but she is in fact central to HELEN's themes of guilt and thwarted redemption. Try as she might, Helen cannot receive forgiveness for her sins; she can't even get anyone to listen to her confession! Metaphorically unable to wash the blood from her hands, the recurrent, literal image of a bloodstained palm, featured prominently throughout the film, serves as a reminder of her guilt. Helen makes her first appearance with her palm already filled with blood. She cuts her hand repeatedly: on the fan, on a thorn in the white rose given to her by Hamilton Starr. In her vision of son Lennie's victim, she focuses on Ellie Banner's bloody hand. Harrington cuts to a closeup of Helen's hand holding the knife with which she's stabbed Adelle. When Helen drops the weapon, the camera lingers on her palm. The very name of Sister Alma's tabernacle—the Haven of the Open Hand—informs us that Helen will find, not God's mercy, but His mercenaries within its doors.

\*\*\*

*In the past ten years a new genre of horror film has emerged, with conventions all its own. Take two mature female stars, add a dependable character actress, concoct a story based on buried hatreds deep-rooted in the past, be sure the title includes a woman's name (Jane, Charlotte, Alice), and voila! a sure-fire flesh-creeper. Though WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? observes all these requirements to the letter, what lifts it above its predecessors is a recreation of the 1930's so marvelously right that the costumes by Morton Haack and the art direction by Eugene Lourie might well be in the running for Oscars.*

—Roger Dooley, *The Villager*

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? received mixed reviews. Vincent Canby in the *New York Times*, while artfully describing the subgenre of "psychotically-dependent women," considered the film "so perfunctory, it's likely to give misogyny a bad name." Writing in *New York* magazine, Judith Crist claimed that "nothing's very credible in WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?," but concluded that the film was "a mixture—but a palatable one for those who like even a minor chiller in the hot months." *Women's Wear Daily's* Gail Rock, whose head was obviously filled with samples of her surname, missed the boat completely:

What's the matter with WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN? . . . you ask? Well, it's the 1940s, see, and both Debbie Reynolds and Shelley Winters have these sons who murdered someone so the mothers hide out in California where Debbie tries to look like Jean Harlow while she runs a tap dancing school and she wants Shelley to look like Marian Davies but Shelley gets religion and stabs people and in between tap dance numbers everybody bleeds all over the cute '40s sets. Damned if I could figure it out.

Damned if she could tell the 1940s from the 1930s, either. Or spell Marion Davies' name correctly. Or find the comma on her keyboard. George Melly raved in *The London Observer*:

As grand guignol it's effective if predictable, but as period reconstruction it's sensational. I've called it camp, and in a way it is; but the control and affection with which Curtis Harrington directs and the exact thirties idiom and solid characterisation of Henry Farrell's screenplay, raise it far above the usual art-deco romp. The actors, too, give splendid performances. Shelley Winters in the title role, fat, soft, and dotty, is in top form . . . the real surprise is Debbie Reynolds as Adelle. Vain and pretty, dumb but not wholly unlikeable, she taps and flirts her way towards the final horror with extraordinary period empathy and professional attack.

If critical explanations at the time stumbled over what was the matter with HELEN, it's understandable, since virtually no critic saw fit to mention that one of the film's two central characters is a lesbian secretly in love with the other. The reviews for WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?, written by establishment and counter-culture critics unattuned to certain aspects of the 70s sexual revolution, are as much a product of their still-repressive period as the film is a flawless evocation of the 30s—and poor, frumpy Helen, even in her notices, found it impossible to confess her "sins," either imagined or murderous.





## SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK

*Continued from page 27*

ing support of Zenobia's plot to drive her neighbors off their land by killing their cattle, Jean has had her blood tapped in order to extract a deadly poison from the plant. As Jean's beau comes to the rescue, Zenobia torches the house. Becoming a tad too enthusiastic with her gasoline bucket, the Spider Woman is engulfed in an inferno of her own making.

Except for Sondergaard's performance and Paul Ivano's crisp photography, most of the pleasures of *THE SPIDER WOMAN STRIKES BACK* are derived from its supporting cast. Brenda Joyce is best known as Jane opposite Johnny Weissmuller's Tarzan when the King of the Jungle moved from MGM to RKO. As her rancher boyfriend, Kirby Grant looks as if he's stumbled off the set of his popular *SKY KING* television show. Reliable Universal regular Milburn Stone puts in a small but welcome appearance. Old friends, all. And, of course, Rondo Hatton, the infamous acromegaly victim turned B-movie heavy, does his usual henchman bit. (Universal selected *HOUSE OF HORRORS* as the film's companion feature. It's sad that the studio, which once launched the horror careers of Karloff and Lugosi, was by 1946 grinding out Rondo Hatton double bills!)

The movie is rife with recognizable bits and pieces from older and better Universal hits. Hans Salter's main title music originated in *SON OF DRACULA* (1943). The climactic-fire music is from Frank Skinner's *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1938) score. The lab/greenhouse set is a left-over from *WEREWOLF*



OF LONDON (1935). And Eric Taylor's script is . . . well, from hunger. But the last word on the subject must come from the Spider Woman herself. In a 1971 *Film Fan Monthly* interview by Leonard Maltin, Sondergaard reflected on the movie: "Well, I almost had hysterics at one time out of just hating it so, I remember. It came out, and people still talk about it, think it's great. And I'm all right . . . I've seen it, and it isn't anything to be ashamed of, but I didn't like it when I did it."

Who's to argue with the Dragon Lady of screen terror?



## I WAS A TEENAGE . . .

*Continued from page 42*

the film shot on a small sound stage by director Richard Cunha. Filming was so rushed that no one took the time to tell makeup man Harry Thomas that the monster was supposed to be a woman.

The results were confusing not only to the audience, but also to the artist who designed the poster, which features a monster with a hairy chest. Frankenstein's lab was built with junk props, loaned on the condition that they'd be cleaned up before they were returned. John Ashley, star of many an AIP J.-D. drama, was cast as the hero. Said Ashley

I knew when we were making the film that it didn't seem very frightening. There I was with this table between me and this monster and I'm rocking it back and forth and I couldn't believe that what we were doing was going to somehow be terrifying because it was on a big screen.

He was correct.

After *FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER*, it didn't seem possible that things could get any worse. Then Warner Bros. purchased a film called *TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE* (1959) to release on the bottom half of a double bill, and, sure enough, it was worse. Written, produced, and directed by Tom Graeff, who also supplied the special effects, it was doubtless an ambitious undertaking and may well have been a sincere effort to create a piece of entertainment, but it was simply too amateurish on every level. Warner Bros. should have been spanked for charging admission to see it.

Stronger punishment was due producer/director Jerry Warren for *TEENAGE ZOMBIES* (1958). Actually, there's only one zombie in the film (not that an army of the creatures would have made things any better): the slave of a mad female doctor



named Myra, who has developed a gas that will turn people into obedient zombies. A group of teenagers is captured by the evil doctor, but before she can use them as guinea pigs they manage to escape. The doctor's pet zombie turns on her and blows up the lab.

Director Warren flatly admitted that he hadn't intended to make a good film; he just wanted something long enough to release as a feature. Warren told interviewer Tom Weaver, "In one sequence, I ran out the whole magazine of film shooting the scene. There were no cuts—it was all the master shot, the whole thing going on for 10 minutes." This pretty much describes the whole picture. The actors walk into a scene, line up, and say their lines, without them or the camera budging an inch. Sadly, this is the film that ended the cycle of teen monster movies.

Perhaps Sam Arkoff's proposed remake of *TEENAGE WEREWOLF* will kick off yet another cycle of juvenile jitters—who knows? Let's just hope that there's no one around who wants to give *TEENAGE ZOMBIES* another shot.





## CHILLING WINTERS

*Continued from page 70*

phone, which was in back of the picture and he made the audience pray that the criminal would not see the telephone. That's how you have to use the audience—by the photography. I really learned a lot from him. I did three pictures with him.

**SS:** Did the fact that Laughton was an actor himself make him a better or worse director?

**SW:** Better. We had great respect for him. Everybody did. Something very funny happened. I was working on the picture and so was Bob Mitchum. It was the first day of photography. It was daytime, and we started at dusk. I got there at four, and Paul Gregory was very angry that Mitchum was so late. He started to scream at him and Mitchum went over and peed on Paul Gregory's new, white Cadillac.

**SS:** Oh, my!

**SW:** He just went over and peed on the Cadillac. (Laughs) After that Gregory didn't scream at the actors any more!

**SS:** Robert Mitchum has never been one to discuss the art of acting.

**SW:** No, he won't. But he's very good and he's very simple, and you really see strength; that's really what's important. Here's a story. I did a picture called KING OF THE GYPSIES, with the great photographer, the Swedish pho-

tographer, Sven Nykvist. Brooke Shields was in it, and Eric Roberts, and the tall, blonde actor who played the King of the Gypsies . . .

**SS:** Sterling Hayden?

**SW:** Sterling Hayden. And me. There were about four people with blue eyes. Four or five of us had blue eyes, and gypsies don't have blue eyes. And they said, "Now, you can't have that, they're blue," so Sven Nykvist put something on the lights to make blue appear black. Well, we didn't see the rushes 'til three or four days later, and the only one who seemed to be acting was Susan Sarandon! And they were good actors! Including me! It took us a minute to figure it out. Sven Nykvist just sat there through the rushes with his hands over his face, 'cause he had made our eyes black—and you couldn't see us think. The blue had to be black, and it took all the thinking away.

**SS:** Oh, boy!

**SW:** So that's what an actor does. Acting is memorizing the thoughts that produce the lines—not memorizing the lines.

**SS:** You made both *LOLITA* and *THE CHAPMAN REPORT* in the early 60s. Do you think the films suffered from the then-prevalent censorship code in Hollywood?

**SW:** Oh, yes. That's why Kubrick went to England.

**SS:** What's your personal opinion of film censorship?

**SW:** Well, right now I would like censorship on violence. I really would. Cars crashing and *ROBOCOP* and gratuitous violence—I really would. When it's funny, that's okay, but just one body after the other killed with machine guns and stuff like that—I think it desensitizes kids. They don't really believe in death. I didn't think in my life that anybody would ever hear me say I believe in censorship, but I'm beginning to feel that—although it's a dangerous step to take. Not sex, but violence. Horror pictures *per se* I don't think are violent, you know?

**SS:** Yes.

**SW:** What was the one just now with the guy sucking the blood of the girl? What is that? *DRACULA*! I thought it was remarkable! Beautiful and strange and eerie—but some of the things I just am aghast at. I don't know if any of my friends agree with me; certainly the producers and directors don't.

**SS:** Curtis Harrington agrees with you.

**SW:** I'll tell you: I did a picture for Mario Monicelli, a great Italian director, and in it my son is going with my husband to take a civil-service exam. He has yellow pencils in his pocket. As they walk, you hear a machine gun—a bank is being robbed—and the camera goes to the ground, and all the yellow pencils are on the ground. And you know the kid's been hit. That's filmmaking. The other thing is just grisly.

## HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD

*Continued from page 53*

As far as Hollywood was concerned, Wood and Graeff, like the subjects of their camp classics, were from outer space, the distance from Earth to the stars being not nearly so great as the distance from obscurity to stardom. West knew this, and peopled his pages with such denizens of the Outer Limits as Faye Greener (an extra who now and then doubles as a hooker); her dad, Harry (a failed comic selling patent medicine door-to-door); her sometimes-lover, Earl Shoup (a drugstore cowboy); Honest Abe Kusich (a dwarf bookie who makes a successful eye-level assault on Earl's testicles); and Mrs. Loomis (a stage mother whose monstrous child meets a fate nasty enough to put a smile on W. C. Fields' face). Farthest-out of all is a character who doesn't even aspire to make it in pictures, a former hotel book-keeper with the (now unfortunate) name of Homer Simpson.

*The Day of the Locust* ends in a Los Angeles riot, the masses rising up in mindless rage at a movie premiere, spurred to a frenzy when young Adore Loomis hits Homer in the face with a rock, and the stunned man, already dazed by the sexual machinations of Faye Greener, stomps the boy to death. Like his characters, West's life ended in violence. Rushing back to Hollywood from a Mexican hunting trip, the writer and his bride of eight months, Eileen McKenney (the subject of Ruth McKenney's 1938 collection of *New Yorker* pieces, *My Sister Eileen*), were killed in a highway accident on December 22, 1940. West had been returning to the Land of Dreams to attend the funeral of his friend, F. Scott Fitzgerald, who had died of a heart attack the previous day.

—Richard Valley

## HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD

Photo credits for pages 52 and 53.

- 1 BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS (1970); © 1970 20th Century-Fox Film Corp., Ltd.
- 2 SUNSET BOULEVARD (1950); Gloria Swanson
- 3 MYRA BRECKINRIDGE (1970); Raquel Welch.
- 4 THE LOVED ONE (1965); Liberace and "the Colonel."
- 5 HEARTS OF THE WEST (1975), Jeff Bridges; © 1975 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- 6 THE JOLSON STORY (1946), Larry Parks; © 1975 Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc.
- 7 THE DAY OF THE LOCUST (1975), Jackie Earl Haley; © 1974 Long Road Productions.
- 8 HARLOW (1965); Carroll Baker.
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- 10 WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? (1962); Bette Davis and Joan Crawford.



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# PARTING SHOT

Quotations compiled by Sally Jane Gellert

I dream for a living.

Steven Spielberg  
*Time*, July 15, 1985

We were looking at the pool one day and somebody, Jerry Appis, I think, said that it needed a dead horse on the bottom, so Alice got one. Don't you think it looks cute?

NATHANAEL WEST  
*The Day of the Locust*

Loeb and Leopold were merely the first bits of human flotsam carried along by a swift stream which had originated deep in the springs of changing thought and which was destined to rise to flood. Those muddy waters are still rising, and the flotsam being swept along in increasing quantities is frightening.

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER  
Introduction, *Life Plus 99 Years*

Haven't you sometimes felt, when you've been sick or tired or worried, that sanity was like a tightrope strung across a

great gulf, that you have to walk over it and if the slightest little adjustment should go wrong you'd topple off and never stop falling?

SAMUEL ROGERS  
*Don't Look Behind You!*

As a psychologist as well as a zoo-keeper, I believe it is better to face an emotion than to lock it up inside of you.

HAROLD MEDFORD  
AND JAMES R. WEBB  
*Phantom of the Rue Morgue*

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow would contain always the horrors she had committed today, yesterday and the day before.

HENRY FARRELL  
*What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?*

If a lawyer was called on to treat a typhoid patient, he would give him thirty days in jail, and then he would think that nobody else would ever dare to catch it. If the patient got well in fifteen days,

he would be kept until his time was up. If the disease was worse at the end of thirty days, the patient would be released because his time was up.

CLARENCE DARROW  
Speech, August 22-25, 1924

Life? Bah! It holds no value. Of the cheap things it is the cheapest. Everywhere it goes begging. Nature spills it out with a lavish hand. Where there is one life, she sows a thousand lives, and it's life eats life till the strongest and most pig-gish life is left.

JACK LONDON  
*The Sea Wolf*

Tell Loeb for me that it makes no difference which of us did the actual killing.

NATHAN LEOPOLD  
*Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 1924

The air of the garden was heavy with the odor of mimosa and honeysuckle. Through a slit in the blue serge sky poked a grained moon that looked like an enormous bone button. A little flagstone path, made narrow by its border of oleander, led to the edge of the sunken pool.

NATHANAEL WEST  
*The Day of the Locust*

Now I can believe that there are unicorns.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
*The Tempest*

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Never before released! This incredible monster/nudist flick is destined to  
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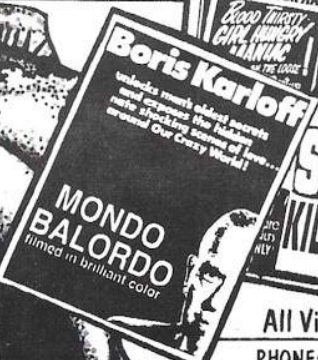
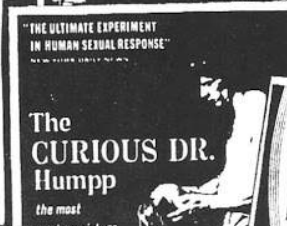
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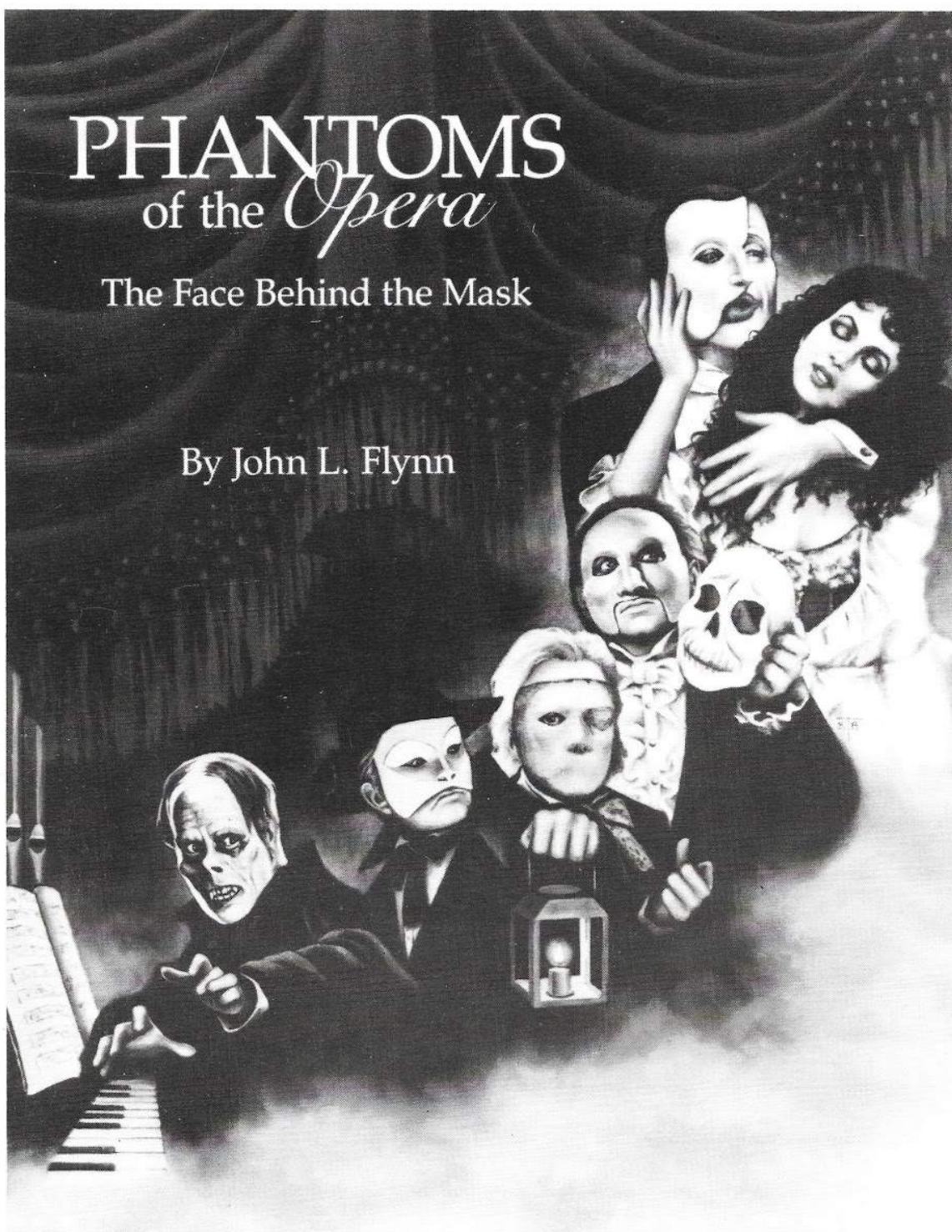
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Adelle (DEBBIE REYNOLDS), (left), receives a threatening anonymous phone call as her friend, Helen (SHELLEY WINTERS) stands by apprehensively. The two women, widows, had fled from Iowa to California after their sons had been convicted of murder in "What's The Matter With Helen?"

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Hamilton Starr (MICHEAL MacLIAMMOIR) an ex-actor, is greeted by Adelle (DEBBIE REYNOLDS) who has hired him as an elocution teacher for the talent Academy she and Helen operate in Hollywood. Helen, however, has an intuitive fear of Starr in "What's The Matter With Helen?"

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your Pal  
Bud Abbott



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To Mary  
most sincerely  
Love, *Arturo*



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Rebecca Staab sank her teeth into the role of Daphne Collins after Cousin Barnabas sank his teeth into Daphne in 1991's *DARK SHADOWS*.

of a secret. Susan is actually very shy, which was kind of a surprise—because when I first got cast, I was picturing, “Oh, a superhero!” I wanted to be strong and bold and fearless, but she’s really a very shy girl, who’s experiencing some tremendous things for the first time in her life. Her invisibility is rooted in her shyness. There’s a time when you want to hide, when you just wish you weren’t there—and, boom! Sue finds that she’s invisible. Later, it ends up being a strength. Susan is no longer shy or fearful; she’s conquered that and has used it to her benefit.

**SS:** How do you view Sue’s relationship to the other members of the team? Reed Richards is your husband . . .

**RS:** We actually get married at the end of the movie. Susan has, overall, the tightest relationship with each character. Johnny and Sue are very close. There’s no sibling rivalry; we’re extremely supportive of each other. And the relationship that Sue has with Reed is really wonderful, because she’s known him since she was a child. As Susan matures, so does the relationship. She ends up providing a humanity for Reed, who was pretty scientific. Sue’s relationship with Ben is really special. When he turns into the Thing, Sue’s the one who really empathizes with his turmoil. Sue’s very sensitive and gentle, so whatever it is that any of the other characters needs she tries to provide. Still, in a lot of the fight scenes, in our battle to overcome Dr.

Doom, I’m the one who leads. I’m not always the one serving drinks. (Laughs)

**SS:** *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* isn’t your first encounter with the fantastic. You were also a regular on *DARK SHADOWS*. Did you have fun as a vampire?

**RS:** I loved it! (Laughs) I’ll never forget one day when a lot of the network people came to the set, and I was standing with my back to them in my vampire make-up. I turned around, and they looked, and their faces were priceless! It was unbelievable! I loved working on that show; I wish that I hadn’t been, you know, staked so soon. (Laughs) It was a whole different kind of energy and focus, just a point of view that your imagination can soar with. I had such a wonderful time playing the character. A vampire—that’s really my favorite part! I hadn’t actually grown up watching *DARK SHADOWS*, but I remembered it from my childhood. I remember so vividly; I was three or four years old, and my sister was in kindergarten, and this was in Grand Islands, Nebraska—I mean, a small town. The elementary school that my sister went to was just down the street, and my mom would walk down to the corner to meet my sister. Mom and I had been watching *DARK SHADOWS*, and she said, “Okay, I’m going to meet Cindy. You’ll be okay here, right?” And I said, “Yeah.” Well, she left, thinking the show was over, but it came back on. And I was sitting there by myself when it came back on!

I got so scared! At the time, my dad worked for the phone company, so all I knew to do was call the operator. So I called the operator, and I just bawled my head off: “My name’s Rebecca Staab, and I’m watching *DARK SHADOWS*, and my mom’s not here, and I’m so scared!” This operator talked to me for whatever it was—I guess it was five minutes—until my mom came back. My mom walked in the door, and she had this four-year-old child on the kitchen floor, crying hysterically on the phone. And she said, “Oh, my God, what happened?” And I said, “*DARK SHADOWS* was still on, and you left!” (Laughs) When I got the show, I said, “Mom, don’t you remember that day?”

**SS:** Dan Curtis is known for being volatile and outspoken. How was it working with him?

**RS:** Well, quite honestly, he was okay with the actors. He would get a little short-tempered with the crew, but I never had any problem with him. If you had a question, or if you needed a moment alone with him, he had no problem separating himself to speak to you, to address the situation. He doesn’t like wasting time. So, when you’re on the set, and things are moving a little slower than they should, he has his ways of getting the momentum cracking.

**SS:** Why do you think the new *DARK SHADOWS* didn’t succeed? It was technically a much better-made show than the original.

**RS:** I know. Maybe it was just something as simple as the time slot. I don’t know if the publicity or marketing was as much as it should have been. Some people felt—it’s so ironic—that it got too romantic when we went back in time and did all the olden stuff. People liked the earlier episodes with the vampires, with more action; with a little bit more horror involved. It’s really too bad, because I wanted to go back on it. That’s what I was begging for: “C’mon, you can bring me back. You can make me somebody else.”

**SS:** Have you appeared at any *DARK SHADOWS* conventions?

**RS:** No, I’ve never been contacted about anything like that.

**SS:** You may be, now.

**RS:** Maybe now. I never really knew that much about them, but I wouldn’t have any hesitation about doing one.

**SS:** If *THE FANTASTIC FOUR* is successful enough to warrant a sequel, would you be interested?

**RS:** Definitely.

**SS:** Have you anything coming up besides *THE FANTASTIC FOUR*?

**RS:** Yes—an NBC series called *TRADEWINDS*, which we’ll shoot in St. Martin. It’s a guaranteed fix on the air, so I’ll be down there most of the summer.





**ABOVE:** The cast of television's *McHALE'S NAVY* included "officers" Bob Hastings, Joe Flynn, Tim Conway, and Ernest Borgnine. **BELOW:** Bob Hastings was the radio voice of comicdom's Archie Andrews for 10 years.

days a week in Philadelphia; I commuted from New York to Philadelphia. I don't even know what year; it had to have been in the 50s—the late 50s. It was an NBC affiliate, and Bob Courtney and I were the two leads. He was the handsome lead, and I was the buddy. We never had our props until air time, and we did a thing where we're helping a guy escape from a prisoner-of-war camp. And Bob never had the clippers—you know, to cut the barb wire?

**SS:** Yes.

**BH:** So, all through rehearsal, he's saying, "Snip, snip. Snip, snip." We get on the air, he has the clippers, and he says, "Snip, snip. Snip, snip." (Laughs) We're trying to sneak out of the camp very quietly and one guy, Coaly Woods, who was the guy we were rescuing, he started laughing. And he got up and hit a tree that fell down. Those were the kind of things that happened. Now, with *BATMAN*, it's like going back to radio, in a sense.

**SS:** Returning to your roots?

**BH:** Yes. Looking for money. (Laughs)

**SS:** Did you read for any character other than Commissioner Gordon?

**BH:** I read for the mayor and Gordon. And it was funny, because having done so much light voice stuff, I wanted to read for Robin. But when we read, I read for my agent. My agent put it on tape, and then he sent it over to Warner Bros. and Andrea, the director. To my knowledge, they listened to about two hundred actors.

**SS:** That's incredible. You're involved in most of the shows, aren't you?

**BH:** Of the supporting cast, Efrem Zimbalist and I do the most episodes. Sometimes I have only two lines. One of my granddaughters in Washington asked her mother: "Mom, would Poppa do only three lines?" I said, "Just tell her it's the same money." (Laughs)

**SS:** Both you and Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., who plays Alfred, add a touch of warmth to the characters. In a show that's so dark in tone, it's needed.

**BH:** As a matter of fact, I think there could be a little more off-the-cuff kind of comedy. If you listen, Batman has some funny lines. I'm so happy that the show has done so well, because I think it's not just for kids. My wife, who's never seen any of the scripts, watches it almost every night and enjoys it. Because I don't think it's just for kids.

**SS:** The stories are so well-constructed.

**BH:** And they're not children's stories, either. That's why I say adults enjoy it. I hope we do more, because that's certainly to everybody's advantage. And another thing is, we don't

hoke it up a lot. I mean, we don't "cartoony" it as far as the characters go. I play Gordon pretty straight, I think, and that makes it a little more interesting for adults.

**SS:** It sounds very genuine.

**BH:** We have a lot of very good people that we use, but you have to tape it to see who they are. I said to somebody, "How do you ever know who plays what?" And they said, "Well, we tape it, and we stop it when the credits come on." (Laughs) Because those credits are fast!

**SS:** And pretty surprising.

**BH:** Like Mark Hamill, for instance, doing the Joker. I think Mark is wonderful as the Joker. You should see him do it. Gosh, the first time I ever saw it, when I saw that face—I just think he does a terrific job. He did a few things with Hanna-Barbera.

**SS:** Oh, really? Do you recall which show it was?

**BH:** Well, I think it was *I DREAM OF JEANNIE*, where he and I played teenagers. It's gotta be back in the 60s, because when I saw him on *BATMAN*, I didn't recognize him. I walked in, and he said, "You don't know me." I said, "I'm sorry?" And he said, "Mark Hamill." And I said, "Why don't you get a haircut?" (Laughs) In the 60s, every time I saw him, every week, I'd say, "Mark, for God's sake, get a haircut!" Y'know, he had long hair and I guess he was in his teens. But I hadn't seen him in about—well, 20 years.

**SS:** Have any *BATMAN* episodes focused on Commissioner Gordon?

**BH:** There have been a couple. Not too many. You know me, I love to work—so I never feel I have enough to do. You know, I will bet you that I had the very first *Batman* comic book that ever came out.

**SS:** If you still had it—

**BH:** I wish I had.

**SS:** Then you'd have considerably more than \$73.

**BH:** You see, I started in radio as a kid, singing in the 30s. I used to commute to Chicago to do a show called *THE NATIONAL BOND HOUR* for Alka Seltzer. And I'd get on the train with my dad, you know, and I'd have comic books. I was about 13 or something, and I'd always have *Superman*—and then all of a sudden came *Batman*. And I know I had some of the first ones. But, you know, whoever saves them? Whoever thought that they would be worth this much money nowadays?

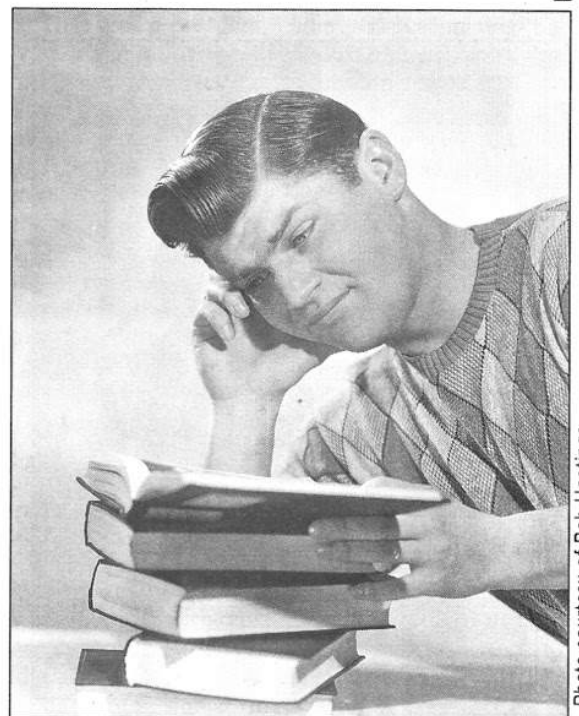


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